اِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ يَهْدِيْ لِلَّتِيْ هِيَ اَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَبِيْرًا ۙ

Quran English Translation and Tafseer
Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi

Surah Al-Baqarah (The Cow)

سُوْرَةُ الْبَقَرَةِ مَدَنِيَّةٌ

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

**(**In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate**)**

الٓمّٓ ۝١

(2-1) Alif, Lam, Mim. [1]

[1] The names of letters of the Arabic alphabet, called huruf muqatta'at, occur at the beginning of several surahs of the Quran. At the time of the Quranic revelation the use of such letters was a well-known literary device, used by both poets and orators, and we find several instances in the pre-Islamic Arabic literature that has come down to us.

Since the muqatta'at were commonly used the Arabs of that period generally knew what they meant and so they did not present a puzzle. We do not notice, therefore, any contemporaries of the Prophet (peace be on him) raising objections against the Quran on the ground that the letters at the beginning of some of its surahs were absurd. For the same reason no Tradition has come down to us of any Companion asking the Prophet about the significance of the muqatta'at. Later on this literary device gradually fell into disuse and hence it became difficult for commentators to determine their precise meanings. It is obvious, however, that deriving right guidance from the Quran does not depend on grasping the meaning of these vocables, and that anyone who fails to understand them may still live a righteous life and attain salvation. The ordinary reader, therefore, need not delve too deeply into this matter.

ذٰلِكَ الْكِتٰبُ لَا رَيْبَ ۛ فِيْهِ ۛ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ۝٢

(2-2) This is the Book of Allah, there is no doubt in it; [2] it is a guidance for the pious, [3]

(2) One obvious meaning of this verse is that this Book, the Quran, is undoubtedly from God. Another possible meaning is that nothing contained in it can be subject to doubt. Books which deal with supernatural questions, with matters that lie beyond the range of sense perception, are invariably based on conjecture and their authors, despite their brave show of competence, are therefore not immune from a degree of skepticism regarding their statements. This Book, which is based wholly on Truth, a Book which is the work of none other than the All-Knowing God Himself is distinguishable from all other books. Hence, there is no room for doubt about its contents despite the hesitation some people might express either through ignorance or folly.

(3) This means that while the Book is potentially for all, only those who possess certain qualities can benefit from it. The first such quality is piety- those who want to benefit should be disposed to distinguish between good and evil, and to shun evil and do good. Those who lead an animal existence, who never to consider whether their actions are either good or bad, whose cynically follow the prevailing winds, who are helplessly tossed about by the animal desires that dominate their minds, such persons are all together incapable of deriving any benefit from the guidance embodied in the Quran.

الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ ﴿٣﴾

(2-3) for those who believe in the existence of that which is beyond the reach of perception, (4) who establish Prayer (5) and spend out of what We have provided them, (6)

(4) This is the second prerequisite for deriving benefit from the Quran. Ghayb signifies the verities which are hidden from man's senses and which are beyond the scope of man's ordinary observation and experience, for example the existence and attributes of God, the angels. the process of revelation, Paradise, Hell and so on. 'Belief in the ghaib means having faith in such matters, based on an absolute confidence in the Messengers of

God and despite the fact that it is impossible to experience them.

According to this verse, Quranic guidance can prove helpful only to those prepared to affirm the truths of the suprasensory realm. People who make their belief in these questions conditional upon sensory perception of the object of belief, and who are not prepared even to consider the possibility of the existence of things that cannot be weighed or measured, cannot profit from this Book.

(5) This is the third requirement. It is pointed out that those to whom belief means merely the pronouncement of a formula, who think that a mere verbal confession of faith is enough and that it makes no practical demands on them, can derive no guidance from the Quran. To benefit from the Quran it is essential that a man's decision to believe should be followed immediately by practical obedience to God.

Prayer is the first and continuing sign of practical obedience. No more than a few hours can pass after a man has embraced Islam than the muadhin calls to Prayer and it becomes evident whether or not the profession of faith has been genuine. Moreover, the muadhin calls to Prayer five times every day and whenever a man fails to respond to his call it becomes clear that he has transgressed the bounds of practical obedience. An abandonment of Prayer amounts to an abandonment of obedience. Obviously, if a man is not prepared to follow the directives of his guide, it is immaterial whether or not true guidance is available to him.

It should also be noted that the expression 'establishment of Prayer' has a wider meaning than mere performance of Prayer. It means that the system of Prayer should be organized on a collective basis. If there is a person in a locality who prays individually but no arrangements are made for congregational Prayer, it cannot be claimed that Prayer is established in that locality.

(6) This, the fourth prerequisite for a person to benefit from the Quran, demands that the person concerned should neither be niggardly nor a worshipper of money. On the contrary, he should

be willing to pay the claims on his property of both God and man, and should not flinch from making financial sacrifices for the sake of his convictions.

وَالَّذِيْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ وَبِالْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوْقِنُوْنَ ۝

(2-4) who believe in what has been revealed to you and what was revealed before you, [7] and have firm faith in the Hereafter.[8]

(7) The fifth requirement is that one should believe in the Books revealed by God to His Prophets in the various ages and regions of the world, in the Book revealed to Muhammad (peace be on him) as well as in those revealed to the other Prophets who preceded him. The door of the Quran is closed to all those who do not consider it necessary for man to receive guidance from God. It is also closed to those who, even if they believe in the need for such guidance, do not consider it necessary to seek it through the channel of revelation and prophethood, but would rather weave their own set of ideas and concepts and regard them as equivalent to Divine Guidance.

This door is also closed to those who believe in Divine books as such, but confine this belief to those books accepted by their forefathers, and spurn Divine Guidance revealed to anyone born beyond their own racial and national boundaries. The Quran excludes all such people and is prepared to open the source of its grace only to those who believe that mankind does require Divine Guidance, who acknowledge that this guidance does not come to people individually but reaches them through Prophets and Divine Books and who are not given to racial or national chauvinism but are devotees of Truth alone, and are therefore prepared to submit to Divine Guidance wherever it be found.

(8) Belief in the After-life is the sixth and last requirement. The term al-Akhirah embraces a whole set of ideas: (i) that man is not an irresponsible being, but is answerable to God for all his

conduct in this world; (ii) that the present order of the world is not timeless, but will come to an end at an appointed hour known only to God; (iii) that when this world comes to an end God will bring into being another world in which He will resurrect, at one and the same moment, all the human beings ever born on earth. He will gather them together, examine their conduct and grant each one just reward for his actions; (iv) that those who are accounted good in God's judgement will be sent to Heaven, and those judged by Him as evil-doers will be consigned to Hell; (v) that the real measure of success and failure is not one's prosperity in the present life, but one's success or failure according to God's judgement in the Next. Those who do not accept this set of beliefs can derive no benefit from the Quran. For if a man is merely in a state of doubt and hesitation with regard to these matters - let alone disbelieving them - he cannot advance even one step forward along the path charted out by the Quran.

أُولٰٓئِكَ عَلٰى هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ ۖ وَأُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٥﴾

(2-5) Such are on true guidance from their Lord; such are the truly successful.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَوَآءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَأَنذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٦﴾

(2-6) As for those who have rejected (these truths), [9] it is all the same whether or not you warn them, for they will not believe.

(9) That is, those people who do not meet these six requirements, or reject all or any one of the fundamentals set out above.

خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلٰى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلٰى سَمْعِهِمْ ۖ وَعَلٰٓى أَبْصٰرِهِمْ غِشَٰوَةٌ ۖ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٧﴾

(2-7) Allah has sealed their hearts [10] and their hearing, and a covering has fallen over their eyes. They deserve severe chastisement.

(10) This does not mean that their rejection of the Truth is a consequence of God sealing their hearts. What is meant is that God sealed their hearts and ears as a consequence of their decision to reject the fundamentals of faith, of their deliberate choice of a path divergent from that charted out by the Quran. Anyone who has worked for the dissemination of the Truth often finds that if, after full consideration, a person decides against a doctrine, his mind begins to move in a completely opposite direction so that he fails to appreciate anything that is explained to him. His ears become deaf, his eyes are blinded to the merits of that doctrine, and one gets the distinct impression that the person's heart has indeed been sealed.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَّقُولُ اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَبِالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَمَا هُم بِمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۘ﴿٨﴾

(2-8) There are some who say: "We believe in Allah and in the Last Day," while in fact they do not believe.

يُخٰدِعُوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا ۚ وَمَا يَخْدَعُوْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ۝﴿٩﴾

(2-9) They are trying to deceive Allah and those who believe, but they do not realize that in truth they are only deceiving themselves.[11]

(11) These people delude themselves that their hypocritical behavior will profit them when in fact it will prove harmful both in this world and the Next. A hypocrite may be able to fool people for a while, but it does not last long; his hypocrisy is ultimately seen through. As for the Next Life, it is obvious that his claim to be a true believer is contradicted by his own actions and is thus quite worthless.

فِیۡ قُلُوۡبِہِمۡ مَّرَضٌ ۙ فَزَادَہُمُ اللّٰہُ مَرَضًا ۚ وَ لَہُمۡ عَذَابٌ اَلِیۡمٌۢ بِمَا کَانُوۡا یَکۡذِبُوۡنَ ﴿۱۰﴾

(2-10) There is a disease in their hearts and Allah has intensified this disease (12) A painful chastisement awaits them for their lying.

(12) ' Disease' here refers to the disease of hypocrisy. The statement that 'Allah has intensified this disease' means that He does not punish the hypocrites immediately but allows them to indulge in their hypocrisy and exult in the success of their ruses. This feeling of success intensifies their hypocrisy.

وَ اِذَا قِیۡلَ لَہُمۡ لَا تُفۡسِدُوۡا فِی الۡاَرۡضِ ۙ قَالُوۡۤا اِنَّمَا نَحۡنُ مُصۡلِحُوۡنَ ﴿۱۱﴾

(2-11) Whenever they are told: “Do not spread mischief on earth,” they say: “Why! We indeed are the ones who set things right.”

اَلَاۤ اِنَّہُمۡ ہُمُ الۡمُفۡسِدُوۡنَ وَ لٰکِنۡ لَّا یَشۡعُرُوۡنَ ﴿۱۲﴾

(2-12) They are the mischief makers, but they do not realize it.

وَ اِذَا قِیۡلَ لَہُمۡ اٰمِنُوۡا کَمَاۤ اٰمَنَ النَّاسُ قَالُوۡۤا اَنُؤۡمِنُ کَمَاۤ اٰمَنَ السُّفَہَآءُ ؕ اَلَاۤ اِنَّہُمۡ ہُمُ السُّفَہَآءُ وَ لٰکِنۡ لَّا یَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿۱۳﴾

(2-13) Whenever they are told: “Believe as others believe,” (13) they answer: “Shall we believe as the fools have believed? “ (14) Indeed it is they who are the fools, but they are not aware of it.

(13) They are being asked to become Muslims in the same manner as others of their community became Muslims

(14) They think that those people who sincerely embraced Islam and thereby exposed themselves to all kinds of trials and persecutions, and confronted risks and dangers, were merely fools. To them it seems sheer folly to invite the hostility of the

entire land merely for the sake of Truth and righteousness. In their view, wisdom consists not in bothering oneself with the distinction between truth and falsehood, but in remaining concerned only with one's own interests.

وَ اِذَا لَقُوا الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡۤا قَالُوۡۤا اٰمَنَّا ۚ وَ اِذَا خَلَوۡا اِلٰی شَیٰطِیۡنِہِمۡ ۙ قَالُوۡۤا اِنَّا مَعَکُمۡ ۙ اِنَّمَا نَحۡنُ مُسۡتَہۡزِءُوۡنَ ﴿۱۴﴾

(2-14) When they meet the believers, they say: “We believe,” but when they meet their evil companions (in privacy), [15] they say: “Surely we are with you; we were merely jesting.”

(15) 'Satan' in Arabic means refractory, rebellious and headstrong, and is used for both human beings and jinn. Although this word is generally used in the Quran for the satans amongst the jinn, it is also used occasionally for human beings possessing satanic characteristics. The context generally explains whether the word 'satan' refers to jinn or to human beings. In this particular case the word 'satans' refers to those influential leaders of the time who were in the vanguard of opposition and hostility to Islam

اَللّٰہُ یَسۡتَہۡزِیٔ بِہِمۡ وَ یَمُدُّہُمۡ فِیۡ طُغۡیَانِہِمۡ یَعۡمَہُوۡنَ ﴿۱۵﴾

(2-15) Allah jests with them, leaving them to wander blindly on in their rebellion.

اُولٰٓئِکَ الَّذِیۡنَ اشۡتَرَوُا الضَّلٰلَۃَ بِالۡہُدٰی ۪ فَمَا رَبِحَتۡ تِّجَارَتُہُمۡ وَ مَا کَانُوۡا مُہۡتَدِیۡنَ ﴿۱۶﴾

(2-16) These are the ones who have purchased error in exchange for guidance. This bargain has brought them no profit and certainly they are not on the Right Way. [16]

(16) This means that two opposite effects emerged when a true servant of God radiated the light which made it possible to distinguish true from false and right from wrong, and made the straight way distinct from the ways of error. To those endowed with true perception, all truths became evident. But those who were almost blinded by the worship of their animal desires perceived nothing.

The expression, 'Allah took away the light of their perception' should not create the impression that these people were not responsible for their stumbling into darkness. Only those who do not seek the Truth, who prefer error to guidance and who are adamantly disinclined to pursue the Truth despite its luminosity, are deprived, by God, of the light of their perception. God simply enables such people to do what they wish.

مَثَلُهُمْ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِى اسْتَوْقَدَ نَارًا فَلَمَّا اَضَآءَتْ مَا حَوْلَهٗ ذَهَبَ اللّٰهُ بِنُوْرِهِمْ وَتَرَكَهُمْ فِىْ ظُلُمٰتٍ لَّا يُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿١٧﴾

(2-17) They are like him who kindled a fire, and when it lit up all around him, Allah took away the light (of their perception) and left them in utter darkness where they can see nothing.

صُمٌّۢ بُكْمٌ عُمْىٌ فَهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿١٨﴾

(2-18) They are deaf, they are dumb, they are blind; (17) they will never return (to the Right Way).

)17( They have become deaf to hear, dumb to utter and blind to perceive the truth.

اَوْ كَصَيِّبٍ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ فِيْهِ ظُلُمٰتٌ وَّرَعْدٌ وَّبَرْقٌ يَجْعَلُوْنَ اَصَابِعَهُمْ فِىْٓ اٰذَانِهِمْ مِّنَ الصَّوٰعِقِ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ وَاللّٰهُ مُحِيْطٌۢ بِالْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿١٩﴾

(2-19) Or they are like those who encounter a violent rainstorm from the sky, accompanied by pitch-dark clouds, thunder-claps and flashes of lightning: on hearing thunder-claps they thrust their fingers into their ears in fear of death. Allah encompasses these deniers of the Truth. (18)

(18) By thrusting their fingers into their ears they temporarily deceive themselves into believing that they can escape the catastrophic end that awaits them. However, they cannot escape that end since God with all His might, encompasses them.

يَكَادُ الْبَرْقُ يَخْطَفُ اَبْصٰرَهُمْ ؕ كُلَّمَاۤ اَضَآءَ لَهُمْ مَّشَوْا فِيْهِ ۙ وَ اِذَاۤ اَظْلَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ قَامُوْا ؕ وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَذَهَبَ بِسَمْعِهِمْ وَاَبْصٰرِهِمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ۝٢٠

(2-20) It is as if the lightning would snatch their sight; whenever it gleams a while for them they walk a little, and when darkness covers them they halt. (19) If Allah so willed, He could indeed take away their hearing and their sight. (20) Surely Allah is All-Powerful.

(19) The first parable refers to those hypocrites who disbelieved completely but had become Muslims merely, to further their worldly interests. The second parable refers to those who were prone to doubt and hesitation or whose faith was weak; who believed in the Truth but not to the extent of exposing themselves to hardships for its sake. The 'violent rainstorm' here alludes to Islam, which came to the world as a blessing. 'Pitch-dark clouds, thunder and lightning' refer to trials, tribulations and difficulties which confronted the Islamic movement, owing to the violent opposition and resistance of those committed to Ignorance. The last part of the parable portrays the state of mind of the hypocrites. They move a little ahead when circumstances seem favorable, but when either difficulties cloud the horizon, or when they are given directives which run counter to their desires or inherited prejudices, they are seized with alarm and come to a halt.

(20) Just as God has completely deprived the first category of hypocrites of their 'light of perception', He could have rendered these other hypocrites totally blind and deaf. But it is not God's way to deprive anyone of sight and hearing while he is willing to see and hear. Hence, God allowed them to retain their sight and hearing to the extent they were prepared to see and hear the Truth.

يَاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوْا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾

(2-21) O mankind, (21) serve your Lord Who has created you as well as those before you; do so that you are saved. (22)

(21) Even though the message of the Quran is addressed to all, benefiting from it depends on ones willingness and on God's succor in relation to that willingness. This is why the Quran first explained which kind of people can and which kind of people cannot benefit from the Quran. As this has been explained in the foregoing verses, the quintessence of the message to which the Quran invites all mankind is now put forth.

(22) So that you are saved from false beliefs and unrighteous conduct in this life, and from the punishment of God in the Next.

الَّذِيْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْاَرْضَ فِرٰشًا وَّالسَّمَآءَ بِنَآءً وَّاَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَاَخْرَجَ بِهٖ مِنَ الثَّمَرٰتِ رِزْقًا لَّكُمْ ۚ فَلَا تَجْعَلُوْا لِلّٰهِ اَنْدَادًا وَّاَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾

(2-22) It is He Who has made the earth a resting-place for you, and the sky a canopy, and sent down water from above wherewith He brought forth fruits for your sustenance. Do not, then, set up rivals (23) to Allah when you know (the Truth).

(23) That is, when man recognizes that all those things were done by none but God, then worship, devotion and service must be exclusively for Him. For who besides the Creator can legitimately claim these things from man?

Not to set up others as rivals to Allah means not to make anyone other than God the object of worship, service and

obedience that one owes to God alone. Later on we shall see, in some detail, how the Quran itself specifies the forms of worship and service which we owe exclusively to God, and wherein associating anyone else amounts to shirk (associating others with God in His divinity). This, the Quran seeks to eradicate.

وَ اِنۡ كُ نۡتُمۡ فِىۡ رَ يۡبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلۡنَا عَلٰى عَبۡدِنَا فَ اۡتُ وۡا بِسُ وۡرَةٍ مِّنۡ مِّثۡلِهٖ وَادۡعُ وۡا شُهَدَآءَكُمۡ مِّنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ صٰدِقِيۡنَ ﴿۲۳﴾

(2-23) If you are in any doubt whether it is We Who have revealed this Book to Our servant, then produce just a surah like it, and call all your supporters and seek in it the support of all others save Allah. Accomplish this if you are truthful. (24)

(24) Before this, in Makka, opponents had often been challenged to produce anything of comparable merit if they believed the Quran to be the work of a human being. In Madinah the same challenge was reiterated. (For similar challenges made elsewhere in the Quran, see (10: 38); (11: 13); (17: 88) and (52- 33)

فَاِنۡ لَّمۡ تَفۡعَلُ وۡا وَلَنۡ تَفۡعَلُ وۡا فَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِىۡ وَقُوۡدُهَا النَّاسُ وَالۡحِجَارَةُ اُعِدَّتۡ لِلۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ ﴿۲۴﴾

(2-24) But if you fail to do this – and you will most certainly fail – then have fear of the Fire whose fuel is men and stones (25) and which has been prepared for those who deny the Truth.

(25) This suggests, in a subtle manner, that in the Next Life not only will the unbelievers become the fuel of hell-fire, but that the same fate will befall the idol-stones they worshipped and before which they had prostrated themselves. They will then know, for sure, how far their idols had any share in godhead.

وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ ۭ كُلَّمَا رُزِقُوْا مِنْهَا مِنْ ثَمَرَةٍ رِّزْقًا ۙ قَالُوْا هٰذَا الَّذِيْ رُزِقْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ ۙ وَاُتُوْا بِهٖ مُتَشَابِهًا ۭ وَلَهُمْ فِيْهَآ اَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ ۙ وَّهُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ۲۵

(2-25) (O Prophet), announce glad tidings to those who believe in this Book and do righteous deeds (in accordance with its teachings), that for them are gardens beneath which rivers flow. Their fruits will have such resemblance to those of the earth that whenever they will be provided with those fruits they will say: “It was this which was granted to us on earth before.” (26) For them there shall be pure spouses, (27) and there they shall abide forever.

(26) The fruits of Paradise will not be so exotic in appearance as to be unfamiliar to people. They will resemble the fruits to which human beings are accustomed in this world, though infinitely excelling them in delicacy of taste. In appearance they may resemble, say mangoes, pomegranates and oranges, and the people of Paradise will be able to identify them as such. In taste, however, there will be no comparison between the terrestrial and heavenly fruits.

(27) The Quranic text has the Arabic word azwaj which means 'spouses' or 'couples', and embraces both husband and wife. The husband is the zawj of his wife, and vice versa. In the Next World, however, this relationship of spouses will be qualified by purity. If a man has been virtuous in this world while his wife has not, their relationship in the Next World will be sundered and the man will receive another spouse who will be pure and virtuous. On the other hand, if a virtuous woman has had an evil husband she will be tied in companionship with a virtuous man. Where husband and wife have both been virtuous their relationship will become everlasting.

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَسْتَحْيٖٓ اَنْ يَّضْرِبَ مَثَلًا مَّا بَعُوْضَةً فَمَا فَوْقَهَا ۭ فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا فَيَعْلَمُوْنَ اَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّهِمْ ۚ وَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا فَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مَاذَآ اَرَادَ اللّٰهُ بِهٰذَا مَثَلًا ۘ يُضِلُّ بِهٖ كَثِيْرًا ۙ وَّيَهْدِيْ بِهٖ كَثِيْرًا ۭ وَمَا يُضِلُّ بِهٖٓ اِلَّا الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ۲۶

(2-26) Behold! Allah is not ashamed to propound the parable of a gnat, or even of something more lowly. [28] On hearing these parables the believers know that it is the truth from their Lord, while those bent on denying the Truth say: “What does Allah mean by these parables?” Thus He causes many to go astray just as He directs many to the Right Way. [29] And He thereby causes to go astray only the transgressors, [30]

(28) Here an objection is indirectly refuted. At several places in the Quran, spiders, flies, gnats and so on are mentioned in order to elucidate certain points. Opponents objected to this on the grounds that such objects were too slowly to find a place in the Book of God. They indicated that had the Quran indeed been a revelation from God it would not have mentioned such trivial objects.

(29) Those who do not wish to understand things and are not motivated by the urge to seek the truth become enmeshed in superficial questions relating to the Book of God, draw altogether erroneous conclusions when they encounter references to apparently insignificant things such as gnats, and are thereby thrown further and further away from the Truth. Those who seek the Truth and possess true perception, on the other hand, penetrate through these superficialities and perceive the gems of wisdom that they embody. This appreciation makes their hearts attest that such wisdom could have no other source than God Himself.

(30) Fasiq means transgressor, disobedient. See also (n 33 below)

الَّذِيْنَ يَنْقُضُوْنَ عَهْدَ اللّٰهِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مِيْثَاقِهٖ ۠ وَيَقْطَعُوْنَ مَآ اَمَرَ اللّٰهُ بِهٖٓ اَنْ يُّوْصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُوْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ ۭ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُوْنَ ۲۷

(2-27) who break the covenant of Allah after its firm binding, [31] and cut asunder what Allah has commanded to be joined, [32] and spread mischief on earth. [33] They are the utter losers.

(31) The injunctions or ordinances issued by a sovereign to his servants and subjects are termed 'ahd in Arabic since compliance with them becomes obligatory for the latter. 'Ahd has been used here in this sense. The 'ahd referred to signifies God's eternal command that all human beings are obliged to render their service, obedience and worship to Him alone. 'After its binding' refers to the promise made by mankind to remain faithful to the injunctions of God at the time of Adam's creation. (For details see(Verse 7: 172)

(32) That is, the transgressors strike their blows at those very relationships upon which the individual and collective well-being of mankind depends, and which God wants maintained on a sound basis. This small sentence is of great import as it embraces the whole of human morality and social life, and extends from relationships between individuals to those between nations. 'To cut asunder what Allah has commanded should he joined' does not merely signify the disruption of relationships between man and man; it forbids the establishment of all forms of human relationship except the right and permissible ones. For wrong and prohibited bonds between people have the same consequences as the disruption of the bonds of human relationship as such

(33) In these three sentences the nature of transgression and the attitude of transgressors is fully defined. To debase the relationship between man and God, and between man and man necessarily leads to 'mischief'. Those who spread this 'mischief' on earth are transgressors.

كَيۡفَ تَكۡفُرُوۡنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَكُنۡتُمۡ اَمۡوَاتًا فَاَحۡيَاكُمۡ ثُمَّ يُمِيۡتُكُمۡ ثُمَّ يُحۡيِيۡكُمۡ ثُمَّ اِلَيۡهِ تُرۡجَعُوۡنَ٢٨

(2-28) How can you be ungrateful to Allah Who bestowed life upon you when you were lifeless, then He will cause you to die and will again bring you back to life so that you will be returned to Him.

ۗ وَ الَّذِیۡ خَلَقَ لَکُمۡ مَّا فِی الۡاَرۡضِ جَمِیۡعًا ۬ۚ ثُمَّ اسۡتَوٰۤی اِلَی السَّمَآءِ فَسَوّٰىہُنَّ سَبۡعَ سَمٰوٰتٍ ؕ وَ ہُوَ بِکُلِّ شَیۡءٍ عَلِیۡمٌ ﴿۲۹﴾

(2-29) It is He Who created for you all that is on earth and then turned above and fashioned it into seven heavens [34] He knows all things. [35]

(34) It is difficult to explain precisely what is meant by the 'seven heavens'. In all ages man has tried, with the help of observation and speculation, to conceptualize the 'heavens', i.e. that which lies beyond and above the earth. As we well know, the concepts that have thus developed have constantly changed. Hence it would be improper to tie the meaning of these words of the Quran to any one of these numerous concepts. What might be broadly inferred from this statement is that either God has divided the universe beyond the earth into seven distinct spheres, or that this earth is located in that part of the universe which consists of seven different spheres.

(35) In this sentence attention is drawn to two important facts. First, man is warned against disbelief and rebellion against God, for God knows all that man does and none of his actions are hidden from Him. Second, it is suggested to man that if he turns away from the All-Knowing God, from the One Who is the source of all knowledge, this can only leave him grouping in the darkness of ignorance and error. When there is no source of truth knowledge except God, and when that very light which alone can illuminate man's life can be obtained from none else but Him, what good can come out of deviation from the Truth?

وَ اِذۡ قَالَ رَبُّکَ لِلۡمَلٰٓئِکَۃِ اِنِّیۡ جَاعِلٌ فِی الۡاَرۡضِ خَلِیۡفَۃً ؕ قَالُوۡۤا اَتَجۡعَلُ فِیۡہَا مَنۡ یُّفۡسِدُ فِیۡہَا وَ یَسۡفِکُ الدِّمَآءَ ۚ وَ نَحۡنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمۡدِکَ وَ نُقَدِّسُ لَکَ ؕ قَالَ اِنِّیۡۤ اَعۡلَمُ مَا لَا تَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿۳۰﴾

(2-30) Just think [36] when your Lord said to the angels: [37] “Lo! I am about to place a vicegerent [38] on earth,” they said: “Will You place on it one who will spread mischief and shed blood [39] while we celebrate Your glory and extol Your holiness?” [40] He said: “Surely I know what you do not know.” [41]

(36) Thus far man has been summoned to serve and obey God on the grounds that God is his creator and sustainer, that in His grasp lies man's life and death, that He alone is the Lord Who rules over the entire universe in which he lives. In view of this, the only attitude which can be deemed appropriate for man is one of service and subjection to God.

The same idea is presented in the following section, but supported on slightly different grounds - namely that God created man as His vicegerent. In this capacity, man is obliged not merely to serve and worship Him, but also to act in accordance with His instructions and guidance. The Quran warns that if man allows himself to be misled by his arch-enemy, Satan, he will be guilty of the most serious rebellion and will have to face the consequences of his action.

In this connection the Quran defines precisely the true nature of man and his correct position in the universe. It also enlightens us to a period of man's past which is otherwise inaccessible. What the Quran tells us here, with its practical consequences, is of far greater value than knowledge derived by unearthing bones and pottery, and piecing together scattered fragments of information with the help of conjecture.

(37) The word malak in Arabic means 'message-bearer'. Angels are not depersonalized and abstract forces, they are beings with personalities of their own and are employed by God for the administration of His universe. They are His faithful servants. Some people have incorrectly considered them to be, in some way or another, God's partners in His Lordship and Godhead, while others have considered them to be His kinsfolk, turning them into gods and worshipping them.

(38) 'Khalifah' or vicegerent is one who exercises the authority delegated to him by his principal, and does so in the capacity of his deputy and agent. Hence, whatever authority he possesses is not inherently his own, but is derived from, and circumscribed by, the limits set by his principal. A vicegerent is not entitled to do what he pleases, but is obliged to carry out the will of his master. If the vicegerent were either to begin thinking himself the real owner and to use the authority delegated to him in whatever manner he pleased, or if he were to acknowledge someone other than the real owner as his lord and master and to follow his directions, these would be deemed acts of infidelity and rebellion.

(39) This was not said by way of objection or protest. It was said rather by way of inquiry and in order to satisfy their curiosity; it is inconceivable that the angels could object to any of God's decisions. The word 'vicegerent' suggested to them that the proposed species of creation would be placed on earth with some authority. It was incomprehensible to them how a species of being which had been invested with discretionary power and authority could conform with the overall order of the universe, which is based on absolute and involuntary subservience to the Will of God. They thought that investing anyone with authority in any part of the universe would lead to mischief and disorder. It is this aspect which the angels were curious about.

(40) This does not mean that the angels considered themselves suitable for 'vicegerency'. They merely wanted to point out that God's orders were already being carried out fully, that they - the angels - were engaged in doing His will and that according to His Divine will the entire universe was kept in a state of absolute purity; moreover, God's glory was constantly being extolled and His holiness celebrated. Since all these things were being done, they wanted to ask what gap was still considered to exist that called for the creation of a new species of being to fill it.

The word tasbih has two meanings: (i) to proclaim glory and (ii) to exert oneself earnestly and energetically. In the same way taqdis has two meanings: (i) to celebrate or proclaim holiness and (ii) to purify.

(41) This was an answer to the latter doubt expressed by the angels. The angels were told that the reason for the appointment of a vicegerent was best known to God alone and could not be understood by them. Despite the services rendered by the angels, something over and above their work was still required. God decided, therefore, to create a new species of being in the world and to invest it with some authority.

وَعَلَّمَ اٰدَمَ ا لَاسْمَآءَ كُلَّ ا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ فَقَالَ اَ نْۢبِـُٔوْنِىْ بِاَسْمَآءِ ٰۤؤُلَآءِ اِ ن كُ نْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ٣١

(2-31) Then Allah taught Adam the names of all things (42) and presented them to the angels and said: “If you are right (that the appointment of a vicegerent will cause mischief) then tell Me the names of these things.”

(42) The nature of man's knowledge is such that he acquires information of different things through their names. Hence it might be said that the sum total of man's knowledge consists of the names of things. To teach Adam the names of all things means, therefore, imparting the knowledge of those things. You, only You, are All-Knowing, All Wise.'

قَالُوْا سُبْحٰنَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَآ اِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا ؕ اِنَّكَ اَ نْتَ الْعَلِيْمُ الْحَكِيْمُ ٣٢

(2-32) They said. “Glory to You! We have no knowledge except what You taught us. (43) You, only You, are All-Knowing, All-Wise.”

(43) It seems that the knowledge of each angel and each genre of angel is confined to its own sphere of competence. The angels appointed to administer, let us say, things relating to air have full knowledge about this subject but have no knowledge, say, about water, and so on and so forth. Man's range of knowledge, however, is comprehensive. Even if man's information in a particular area may be narrower than that of the angel directly

concerned with it, the total range of his knowledge has a comprehensiveness which has not been granted to the angels.

قَالَ يٰۤاٰدَمُ اَنۢبِئۡهُمۡ بِاَسۡمَآئِهِمۡ ۚ فَلَمَّاۤ اَنۡۢبَاَهُمۡ بِاَسۡمَآئِهِمۡ ۙ قَالَ اَلَمۡ اَقُلۡ لَّكُمۡ اِنِّىۡۤ اَعۡلَمُ غَيۡبَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ ۙ وَاَعۡلَمُ مَا تُبۡدُوۡنَ وَمَا كُنۡتُمۡ تَكۡتُمُوۡنَ ﴿۳۳﴾

(2-33) Then Allah said to Adam: “Tell them the names of these things.” (44) And when he had told them the names of all things, Allah said: “Did I not say to you that I know everything about the heavens and the earth which are beyond your range of knowledge and I know all that you disclose and also all that you hide?”

(44) This demonstration of Adam's capacity was an answer to the first of the doubts the angels had expressed. In this manner, they were made to realize that God had not only bestowed some authority upon man, but had also endowed him with knowledge. Fear of mischief and disorder through man's appointment as vicegerent is only one aspect of the matter. The other aspect is constructive and offsets man's potentiality for spreading mischief. For the wise will not sacrifice a major good for fear of a minor harm.

وَاِذۡ قُلۡنَا لِلۡمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اسۡجُدُوۡا لِاٰدَمَ فَسَجَدُوۡۤا اِلَّاۤ اِبۡلِيۡسَ ؕ اَبٰى وَاسۡتَكۡبَرَ ۟ وَكَانَ مِنَ الۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ ﴿۳۴﴾

(2-34) And when We ordered the angels: “Prostrate yourselves before Adam,” all of them fell prostrate, (45) except Iblis. (46) He refused, and gloried in his arrogance and became one of the defiers. (47)

(45) This signifies that all the angels whose jurisdiction embraces the earth and that part of the universe in which the earth is situated were ordered to devote themselves to man's service. Since man had been invested with authority on earth the

angels were told that whenever man wanted to make use of the powers with which he had been invested by God, and which God of His own will had allowed him to use, they should co-operate with him and enable him to do whatever to do, irrespective of right and wrong.

This can be understood with reference to the manner in which government employees are required to work. When a sovereign appoints a governor or a magistrate, all government employees under his jurisdiction are duty not. But as soon as the sovereign indicates to those employees that the governor or magistrate should be barred from doing something, the effective authority of the governor or the magistrate comes to an abrupt end. In fact, were the sovereign to issue the order that the governor be dismissed or imprisoned, the same employees who until then had been moving to and fro at his bidding would not feel hesitant in putting hand on him and taking him to prison.

God's order to the angels to prostrate themselves before Adam was of a similar nature. It is possible that prostration signifies the fact of their becoming yoked to man's service. At the same time it is also possible that they, were ordered to perform the act of prostration itself as a sign of the envisaged relationship between angels and man. In my view the latter seems more plausible.

(46) Iblis literally means 'thoroughly disappointed; utterly in despair'. In Islamic terminology the word denotes the jinn who, in defiance of God's command, refused to obey and to yoke himself to the service of Adam and his progeny and asked God to allow him a term when he might mislead and tempt mankind to evil and error. He is also called al-Shaytan (Satan)

In fact Satan (or Iblis) is not an abstract, impersonal force. Like human beings he is possessed of a specific personality. Moreover, one should not make the mistake of considering Satan an angel. Elsewhere the Quran itself clearly states that he was a jinn and jinn, as we know, are an independent species, distinct from the angels. See(Quran 18: 50)

(47) These words seem to indicate that in committing disobedience Iblis was probably not alone. What seems to have been the case is that a section of the jinn was bent upon rebellion and the name of Iblis is mentioned only because he was their leader and the most noted among them for his rebellion. Another translation of this sentence could be: "and he was of the defiers (kafirin)'. If this sense is correct, these words would signify that there was already a party of rebellious and recalcitrant jinn and that Iblis belonged to that party. In the Quran the word shayatin (satans) denotes these jinn and their offspring. Hence, whenever the context itself does not indicate that the term has been used for human beings who possess satanic attributes, the word ' Satans' should be understood to signify these satanic jinn.

وَقُلْنَا يٰٓاٰدَمُ اسْكُنْ اَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هٰذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُوْنَا مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾

(2-35) And We said: “O Adam, live in the Garden, you and your wife, and eat abundantly of whatever you wish but do not approach this tree (48) or else you will be counted among the wrong-doers.” (49)

(48) This indicates that before man was sent to earth Moreover, for this kind of test Paradise was the best possible place. What God wanted to impress on man was that the only place that befits man's station is Paradise, and that if man turns from the course of obedience to God as a result of Satanic allurements, he will remain deprived of it in the Next Life even as he was deprived of it once before. The only way he can recover his true status and reclaim the lost Paradise is by resisting effectively the enemy who is always trying to drive him off the course of obedience to God.

(49) The use of the word 'wrong-doer' is highly significant. 'Wrong-doing' consists in withholding someone's rights and the wrong-doer is one who withholds those rights from their legitimate claimants. Anyone who disobeys God withholds three major rights. The first is what is due to God, for He has the right

to be obeyed. Second, there are the rights of all those things which a man employs in disobeying God. The parts of his body, his mental energy, his fellow-beings, those angels who, under Divine dispensation, have been appointed to enable him to achieve his aims. both righteous and unrighteous, the material objects which he employs in his acts of disobedience - all these have a rightful claim upon him to be used in ways that please God. But when he uses them in ways which displease God he commits wrong against them all. Third, he wrongs his own self which has the right to be saved from perdition. By inviting punishment from God because of his disobedience he wrongs his own self as well. It is for these reasons that the word 'wrong' is often used in the Quran for sin, and the word 'wrong-doer' for sinner

فَاَزَلَّ ُمَا الشَّيْطٰنُ عَنْهَا فَاَخْرَجُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا فِيْهِ وَقُلْنَا اهْبِطُوْا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِى الْاَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَّمَتٰعٌ اِلٰى حِيْنٍ ﴿٣٦﴾

(2-36) But Satan caused both of them to deflect from obeying Our command by tempting them to the tree and brought them out of the state they were in, and We said: “Get down all of you; henceforth, each of you is an enemy of the other, (50) and on earth you shall have your abode and your livelihood for an appointed time.”

(50) This means that Satan is the enemy of man, and vice versa. That Satan is the enemy, of man is obvious enough, for he tries to drive him off the course of obedience to God and leads him to perdition, but one might wonder how man could be referred to as the enemy of Satan. The fact is that man's essential humanity makes this enmity incumbent upon him. Man, however, is often deceived by Satan and befriends him owing to the temptations that he holds out to him. This kind of friendship does not mean that the basic, irreconcilable clash of interests between man and Satan has been resolved. It only means that one of the two (Satan) has defeated and successfully trapped the other (man).

فَتَلَقّٰٓى اٰدَمُ مِنْ رَّبِّهٖ كَلِمٰتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ ۭ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيْمُ ۝٣٧

(2-37) Thereupon Adam learned from his Lord some words and repented (51) and his Lord accepted his repentance for He is Much-Relenting, Most Compassionate. (52)

(51) This means that when Adam became conscious of his act of sin and wanted to return from his state of disobedience to that of obedience, and when he tried to seek remission for his sin from God, he was unable to find the words to use in his prayer to God. In His Mercy God taught him the words with which he could pray.

The word tawbah basically denotes 'to come back, to turn towards someone'. Tawbah, on the part of man, signifies that he has given up his attitude of disobedience and has returned to submission and obedience to God. The same word used in respect of God means that He has mercifully turned towards His repentant servant so that the latter has once more become an object of His compassionate attention.

(52) The Quran refutes the doctrine that certain consequences necessarily follow from sins and that man must in all cases bear them. In fact this is one of the most misleading doctrines to have been invented by human imagination. If it were true it would mean that a sinner would never have the opportunity to have his repentance accepted. It is a mechanistic view of reward and punishment and thus prevents and discourages the sinner from trying to improve.

The Quran, on the contrary, tells man that reward for good actions and punishment for bad ones rests entirely with God. The reward that one receives for good acts is not the natural consequence of those acts; it is rather due to the grace and benevolence of God and it is entirely up to Him to reward one or not. Likewise, punishment for evil deeds is not a natural and unalterable consequence of man's acts. God has full authority to punish man for his sin as well as to pardon him.

God's grace and mercy, however, are interrelated with His wisdom. Since He is wise, He does not use His power arbitrarily. Hence, whenever God rewards a man for his good acts, He does so because the good was done with purity of intention and for the sake of pleasing God. And if God refuses to accept an act of apparent goodness, He does so because that act had merely the form or appearance of goodness, and was not motivated by the desire to please God.

In the same way God punishes man for those sins which he commits with rebellious boldness, and which whet his appetite for more rather than lead him to repentance. Similarly, in His mercy God pardons those sins which are followed by genuine repentance and readiness on the part of the sinner to reform himself. There is no need for the criminal to despair of God's grace and mercy, no matter how great a criminal he is. Nor is there any reason for even the most rabid disbeliever to despair, provided he recognizes his error, repents of his disobedience and is ready to replace his former disobedience with obedience.

قُلْنَا اهْبِطُوْا مِنْهَا جَمِيْعًا فَاِمَّا يَاْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِّنِّيْ هُدًى فَمَنْ تَبِعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ ۝٣٨

(2-38) We said: “Get you down from here, (53) all of you, and guidance shall come to you from Me: then, whoever will follow My guidance need have no fear, nor shall they grieve.

(53) The reiteration of this statement is significant. We have been told above that Adam repented and that his repentance was accepted by God. This means that the stain of sin was washed away and therefore no stain remained

On the contrary, God not only accepted Adam's repentance but also honored him by endowing him with prophethood so that he might be able to direct his children correctly. The repetition of the order to leave Paradise and go down to earth is aimed at driving home the point that earth was

not created as a place of punishment for man. On the contrary, man was put on earth to serve as God's vicegerent there. It was only to test man and thereafter to equip him for the performance of God's vicegerency that man was placed temporarily in Paradise. See also(n. 48 above)

وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَكَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ۝٣٩

(2-39) But those who refuse to accept this (guidance) and reject Our Signs as false (54) are destined for the Fire where they shall abide forever." (55)

(54) Ayat is the plural of ayah which means a 'sign' or 'token' which directs one to something important. In the Quran this word is used in four different senses. Sometimes it denotes a sign or indication. In certain other places the phenomena of the universe are called the ayat (signs) of God, for the reality to which the phenomena point is hidden behind the veil of appearances. At times the miracles performed by the Prophets are also termed ayat since they show that the Prophets were envoys of the Sovereign of the universe. Lastly, individual units of the Book of God are also called ayat because they point to the ultimate reality, and because the substantive contents of the Book of God, its phraseology, its style, its inimitable literary excellence are clear tokens of the attributes of the Author of the Book. The sense in which the word ayah has been used in a particular verse becomes evident from the context of its occurrence.

(55) This is a permanent directive from God to mankind which is valid from the beginning of life until the Day of Judgement. It is this which has been mentioned earlier as God's covenant see (n. 31 above).

It is not for man to prescribe the way of life which his fellow human beings should follow. In his double capacity as the subject and vicegerent of God, man is required to follow the way of life prescribed by his Lord. There are only two means of access

to this way: either by direct revelation from God or by following one to whom God has revealed guidance. Nothing else can direct man to the way that enjoys God's approval and good pleasure. Resorting to any other means in quest of salvation is not only fundamentally mistaken but tantamount to rebellion.

The story of the creation of Adam and the origin of the human species occurs seven times in the Quran, once in the verses just mentioned. For other references see (7: 11 ff), (15: 26 ff)., (17: 61 ff)., (18: 50), (20: 116 ff)., (38: 71 ff). The story also occurs in the Bible in Genesis 1, 2 and 3. A comparative reading of the Quranic and Biblical versions will enable the perceptive reader to detect the differences between the two.

The dialogue between God and the angels at the time of the creation of Adam is also mentioned in the Talmud. This account lacks the spiritual significance underlying the Quranic version. Indeed, the Talmudic version additionally contains the following oddity: when the angels ask why men are being created, God replies that they are being created so that good people may be born among them. God refrains from mentioning the bad people lest the angels disapprove the creation of man! (See Paul Isaac Hershon, Talmudic Miscellany, London, 1880, pp. 294)

يٰبَنِىۡۤ اِسۡرَآءِيۡلَ اذۡكُرُوۡا نِعۡمَتِىَ الَّتِىۡۤ اَنۡعَمۡتُ عَلَيۡكُمۡ وَاَوۡفُوۡا بِعَهۡدِىۡۤ اُوۡفِ بِعَهۡدِكُمۡ وَ اِيَّاىَ فَارۡهَبُوۡنِ ۴۰

(2-40) Children of Israel! (56) Recall My favor which I had bestowed on you, and fulfil your covenant with Me and I shall fulfil My covenant with you, and fear Me alone.

(56) 'Israel' means the slave of God. This was the title conferred on Jacob (Ya'qub) by God Himself. He was the son of Isaac and the grandson of Abraham. His progeny are styled the 'Children of Israel'.

Turning to the Quranic text itself, it is noteworthy that the foregoing verses have been in the nature of introductory remarks

addressed to all mankind. From the present section up to and including the fourteenth (verses 40 discourse, the reader should be particularly aware of the following purposes:

The first purpose of this discourse is to invite those followers of the earlier Prophets who still had some element of righteousness and goodness to believe in the Truth preached by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) and to join hands in promoting the mission he championed. In these sections they are told that the Quran and the Prophet are bearers of the same message and mission preached by the earlier Prophets and Scriptures.

The earlier communities were entrusted with the Truth in order that, as well as following it themselves, they might call others towards it and try to persuade them to follow it. But instead of directing the world in the light of this truth, they themselves failed to follow the Divine Guidance and sank into degeneracy. Their history and their contemporary religious and moral condition bore out this degeneration.

They are also told that God has once again entrusted the same Truth to one of His servants and has appointed him to carry out the same mission as that of the earlier Prophets and their followers. What the Prophet has brought is, therefore, neither new nor foreign; it is their very own and they are asked to accept it as such. A fresh group of people has now arisen with the same mission they had, but which they failed to carry out. It is clearly their duty to support these people.

The second purpose of this discourse is to leave no reasonable justification for the negative Jewish attitude towards Islam, and to expose fully the true state of the religious and moral life of the Jews. This discourse makes it clear that the religion preached by the Prophet was the same as that preached by the Prophets of Israel. So far as the fundamentals are concerned, nothing in the Quran differs from the teachings of the Torah. It is also established that the Jews failed glaringly to follow the guidance entrusted to them, even as they had failed to live up to the position of leadership in which they had been placed. This

point is established by reference to events of irrefutable authenticity.
Moreover, the way in which the Jews resorted to conspiracies and underhand machinations designed to create doubts and misgivings, the mischievous manner in which they engaged in discussions, the acts of trickery in which they indulged in willful opposition to the Truth, and the vile tactics which they employed in order to frustrate the mission of the Prophet, were all brought into sharp relief so as to establish that their formal, legalistic piety was a sham. What lay behind it was bigotry, chauvinism and self-aggrandizement rather than an honest search for and commitment to the Truth. The plain fact was that they did not want goodness to flourish.

This candid criticism of the Jews had several salutary effects. On the one hand, it made the situation clear to the good elements among the Jews. On the other, it destroyed the religious and moral standing of the Jews among the people of Madinah, and among the pagans of Arabia as a whole. Moreover, it undermined the morale of the Jews to such an extent that from then on they could not oppose Islam with a firmness born of strong inner conviction.

Third, the message addressed in the earlier sections to mankind as a whole is here elucidated with reference to a particular people. The example of the Jews is cited to show the tragic end that overtakes a people when it spurns Divine Guidance. The reason for choosing the Children of Israel as an example is that they alone, out of all the nations, constituted for four thousand years the continual embodiment of a tragedy from which many lessons could be learnt. The vicissitudes of fortune which visit a people, depending on whether they follow or refrain from following Divine Guidance, were all conspicuous in the history of this nation.

Fourth, this discourse is designed to warn the followers of Muhammad (peace be on him) to avoid the same pitfalls as the followers of the earlier Prophets. While explaining the requirements of the true faith, it clearly specifies the moral weaknesses, the false concepts of religion, and the numerous

errors in religious belief and practice which had made inroads among the Jews. The purpose is to enable Muslims to see their true path clearly and to avoid false ones. While studying the Quranic criticism of the Jews and Christians, Muslims should remember the Tradition from the Prophet in which he warned them that they would so closely follow the ways of the earlier religious communities that if the latter had entered a lizard's burrow, so would the Muslims. The Prophet was asked: 'Do you mean the Christians and Jews, O Messenger of God?' The Prophet replied: 'Who else?' (See Bukhari, 'Itisam', 14; Muslim, "Ilm', 6 - Ed.) This was not merely an expression of reproof. Thanks to the peculiar discernment and insight with which the Prophet was endowed, he knew the ways in which corruption encroaches upon the lives of the followers of the Prophets, and the different forms it assumes.

وَاٰمِنُوا بِمَا اَنۡزَلۡتُ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا مَعَكُمۡ وَلَا تَكُوۡنُوۡۤا اَوَّلَ كَافِرٍ بِهٖ ۪ وَلَا تَشۡتَرُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِىۡ ثَمَنًا قَلِيۡلًا وَّ اِيَّاىَ فَاتَّقُوۡنِ ﴿۴۱﴾

(2-41) And believe in the Book which I have revealed and which confirms the Scripture you already have, and be not foremost among its deniers. Do not sell My signs for a trifling gain, (57) and beware of My wrath.

(57) 'Trifling gain' refers to the worldly benefits for the sake of which they were rejecting God's directives. Whatever one may gain in exchange for the Truth, be it all the treasure in the world, is trifling; the Truth is of supreme value.

وَلَا تَلۡبِسُوا الۡحَقَّ بِالۡبَاطِلِ وَتَكۡتُمُوا الۡحَقَّ وَاَنۡتُمۡ تَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿۴۲﴾

(2-42) Do not confound Truth by overlaying it with falsehood, nor knowingly conceal the Truth. (58)

(58) For the proper understanding of this verse we need to recall that in the time of the Prophet the Jews of Arabia were more learned than the Arabs. In fact, there were some Jewish scholars

of Arabia whose fame had spread even beyond the confines of that land. For this reason the Arabs tended to be intellectually overawed by them. In addition, the influence of the Jews had become pervasive and profound by virtue of the pomp and pageantry of their religious rites, and the magical crafts and feats of exorcism for which they were famous. The people of Madinah, in particular, were greatly under the spell of the Jews. These Jews made on them the sort of impression generally created on ignorant neighbors by a better educated, more refined and more conspicuously religious group.

It was natural in such circumstances that, when the Prophet began to preach his message, the ignorant Arabs should approach the Jews and ask their opinion of the Prophet and his teachings, particularly as the Jews also believed in Prophets and Scriptures. We find that this inquiry was often made by the Makkans, and continued to he addressed to the Jews after the Prophet arrived in Madinah.

In reply to this query, however, the Jewish religious scholars never told the candid truth. It was impossible for them to say that the doctrine of monotheism preached by Muhammad was incorrect, that there was any error in his teachings regarding the Prophets, the Divine Scriptures, the angels and the Next Life and that there was any error in the principles of moral conduct which the Prophet propounded. At the same time, however, they were not prepared to make a straightforward affirmation of the truth of his teachings. In short, they neither categorically denied the Truth nor were prepared to accept it with open hearts.

Instead, they tried to plant insidious doubts in the minds of everybody who enquired about the Prophet and his mission. They sought to create one misgiving after another, disseminated new slanders, and tried to engage people's minds in all kinds of hypothetical problems so as to keep them in a state of doubt and uncertainty. They also tried to raise controversial issues which might keep people, including the followers of the Prophet, entangled in sterile debate. It is this attitude of the Jews to which the Quran alludes when it asks them not to overlay the truth with

falsehood, not to suppress and conceal it by resorting to false propaganda and mischievous campaigns of slander, and not to attempt to deceive the world by mixing truth with falsehood.

وَاَقِيۡمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ وَارۡكَعُوۡا مَعَ الرّٰكِعِيۡنَ ۴۳

(2-43) Establish Prayer and dispense Zakah (the Purifying Alms) (59) and bow in worship with those who bow.

(59) Prayer and Purifying Alms (Zakah) have always been among the most important pillars of the Islamic faith. Like other Prophets, the Prophets of Israel laid great stress upon them. The Jews had, however, become very negligent about these duties. Congregational Prayer had all but ceased among them; in fact, a great majority of the Jews did not perform Prayers even individually. They had also not only ceased to pay Purifying Alms, but some had even gone so far as to make their living out of interest.

اَتَاۡمُرُوۡنَ النَّاسَ بِالۡبِرِّ وَتَنۡسَوۡنَ اَنۡفُسَكُمۡ وَاَنۡتُمۡ تَتۡلُوۡنَ الۡكِتٰبَ ؕ اَفَلَا تَعۡقِلُوۡنَ ۴۴

(2-44) Do you enjoin righteousness on people and forget your own selves even though you recite the Scripture? Have you no sense?

وَاسۡتَعِيۡنُوۡا بِالصَّبۡرِ وَالصَّلٰوةِ ؕ وَاِنَّهَا لَكَبِيۡرَةٌ اِلَّا عَلَى الۡخٰشِعِيۡنَ ۴۵

(2-45) And resort to patience and Prayer for help. (60) Truly Prayer is burdensome for all except the devout,

(60) That is, if they feel difficulty in keeping to righteousness, the remedy lies in resorting to Prayer and patience. From these two attributes they will derive the strength needed to follow their chosen course.

The literal meaning of 'sabr' is to exercise restraint, to keep oneself tied down. It denotes the will-power, the firm resolve and the control over animal desires which enables man to advance along the path of his choice - the path that satisfies his heart and conscience - in utter disregard of the temptations within, and of all obstacles and opposition without. The purpose of this directive is to urge man to develop this quality and to reinforce it from the outside by means of Prayer.

الَّذِيۡنَ يَظُنُّوۡنَ اَنَّهُمۡ مُّلٰقُوۡا رَبِّهِمۡ وَاَنَّهُمۡ اِلَيۡهِ رٰجِعُوۡنَ۴۶

(2-46) who realize that ultimately they will have to meet their Lord and that to Him they are destined to return. (61)

(61) This means that Prayer is an insufferable encumbrance and affliction for the man who tends not to want to obey, God and to believe in the After-life. For the man who, of his own violation, has to stand before God after death, it is failure to perform the Prayer, rather than its performance, that becomes intolerable.

يٰبَنِىۡۤ اِسۡرَآءِيۡلَ اذۡكُرُوۡا نِعۡمَتِىَ الَّتِىۡۤ اَنۡعَمۡتُ عَلَيۡكُمۡ وَاَنِّىۡ فَضَّلۡتُكُمۡ عَلَى الۡعٰلَمِيۡنَ۴۷

(2-47) Children of Israel! Recall My favor which I bestowed upon you, exalting you above all nations. (62)

(62) This refers to that period of human history when, of all nations, only the Children of Israel possessed that knowledge of Truth which comes from God alone. At that time they were entrusted with the task of directing the nations of the world to righteousness; they were expected to serve God and to invite the rest of the world to do the same.

وَاتَّقُوْا يَوْمًا لَّا تَجْزِيْ نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَّفْسٍ شَيْـًٔا وَّلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَّلَا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَّلَا هُمْ يُنْصَرُوْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾

(2-48) Fear the Day when no one shall avail another, when no intercession will be accepted, when no one will be ransomed, and no criminal will receive any help.(63)

(63) A major reason for the degeneration of the Israelites was the corruption of their beliefs about the After that since they were related to those venerable saints and pious men who had dedicated themselves entirely to the service of God in the past, the, would be forgiven by the grace of those great men. They believed that once they had bound themselves firmly to those men of God, it would become impossible for God to punish them. Such false reliance made them negligent of true religious piety and enmeshed them in a life of sin and wickedness. Hence, as well as reminding the Children of Israel of God's favor upon them, it was necessary to refute all the false ideas which they cherished.

وَاِذْ نَجَّيْنٰكُمْ مِّنْ اٰلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُوْمُوْنَكُمْ سُوْٓءَ الْعَذَابِ يُذَبِّحُوْنَ اَبْنَآءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُوْنَ نِسَآءَكُمْ ۭ وَفِيْ ذٰلِكُمْ بَلَآءٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿٤٩﴾

(2-49) And recall (64) when We rescued you from the slavery of Pharaoh’s people (65) who had afflicted you with dreadful suffering, slaying your males and sparing your females. That was a tremendous trial for you from your Lord. (66)

(64) From here on, through the several sections that follow, reference is made to the best

(65) We have rendered 'Al-Firawn' as 'Pharaoh's people'. This includes the members of the Pharaonic family as well as the aristocracy of Egypt.

(66) The test was whether they would emerge from the crucible of persecution as pure gold, or as mere dross. The test also lay, in

whether or not, after their miraculous deliverance from so great a calamity, they would become grateful servants of God.

وَ اِذْ فَرَقْنَا بِكُمُ الْبَحْرَ فَاَ نْجَيْنٰكُمْ وَاَغْرَقْنَآ اٰلَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَاَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُوْنَ ۝٥٠

(2-50) And recall when We split the sea, providing passage for you, and thus saved you and caused Pharaoh's people to drown before your very eyes.

وَ اِذْ وٰعَدْنَا مُوْسٰۤى اَرْبَعِيْنَ لَيْلَةً ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ وَاَنْتُمْ ظٰلِمُوْنَ ۝٥١

(2-51) And recall when We summoned Moses for a term of forty nights, (67) and then you set up the calf as your god in his absence. (68) You indeed committed a grave wrong.

(67) When the Israelites reached the Sinai peninsula after their exodus from Egypt, God summoned Moses to the mountain for forty days and nights so that the nation which had now achieved independence could be taught law and morality. (See Exodus 24-31)

(68) The cult of cow-worship was widespread among Israel's neighbors. It was particularly common in Egypt and Canaan. After the time of Joseph, when the Israelites fell prey to degeneracy and became the slaves of the Copts, they were contaminated by many of the corrupt practices prevalent among their rulers. Cow-worship was one of them. (There is a detailed account of the episode of calf-worship in Exodus 32)

ثُمَّ عَفَوْنَا عَنْكُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ ۝٥٢

(2-52) Yet We pardoned you that you might be grateful.

وَ اِذْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ وَالْفُرْقَانَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُوْنَ ۝٥٣

(2-53) And recall (that while you were committing this wrong) We gave Moses the Scripture [69] and the Criterion that you are guided to the Right Way.

(69) 'Criterion' here means that understanding of religion which differentiates truth from falsehood, making each stand out distinctly.

وَ اِذْ قَالَ مُوۡسٰی لِقَوْمِهٖ یٰقَوْمِ اِنَّكُمْ ظَلَمْتُمْ اَنْفُسَكُمْ بِاتِّخَاذِكُمُ الْعِجْلَ فَتُوْبُوْۤا اِلٰی بَارِئِكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوْۤا اَنْفُسَكُمْ ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ خَیْرٌ لَّكُمْ عِنْدَ بَارِئِكُمْ ؕ فَتَابَ عَلَیْكُمْ ؕ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِیْمُ ﴿۵۴﴾

(2-54) And recall when (on returning with this favor) Moses said to his people: “My people! You have wronged yourselves by taking the calf for an object of worship, so turn in repentance to your Creator and kill yourselves. [70] This will be best for you in your Creator’s sight.” Thereupon He accepted your repentance. Indeed He is Much-Relenting, Most Compassionate.

(70) That is, they should put to death those of their own number who made the calf an object of worship and actually worshipped it.

وَ اِذْ قُلْتُمْ یٰمُوْسٰی لَنْ نُّؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتّٰی نَرَی اللّٰهَ جَهْرَةً فَاَخَذَتْكُمُ الصّٰعِقَةُ وَاَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُوْنَ ﴿۵۵﴾

(2-55) And recall when you said: “O Moses, we will not believe in you until we clearly see Allah (speaking to you).” Thereupon a tremendous thunderbolt struck you before your very eyes.

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنٰكُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ مَوْتِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿۵۶﴾

(2-56) Then We revived you after your extinction, that you might be grateful. [71]

(71) The incident referred to here is the following. When Moses went to the mountain he had been ordered to bring with him seventy elders of Israel. Later, when God bestowed upon Moses the Book and the Criterion, he presented them to the people. Some mischief-makers, according to the Quran, began to complain that they could not believe in something just because Moses claimed that God had spoken to him. This invited the wrath of God and they were punished. The Old Testament, however, has the following account:

'And they saw the God of Israel and there was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank' (Exodus 24: 10-11),

Interestingly, it is stated later in the same book that when Moses requested God to show him His glory, God rejected the request and said: 'You cannot see my face; for man shall not see me and live'. (See Exodus 33: 18-23)

وَظَلَّلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْغَمَامَ وَاَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّ وَالسَّلْوٰى ؕ كُلُوْا مِنْ طَيِّبٰتِ مَا رَزَقْنٰكُمْ ؕ
وَمَا ظَلَمُوْنَا وَلٰكِنْ كَانُوْۤا اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُوْنَ ۝٥٧

(2-57) And We caused a cloud to comfort you with shade, (72) and We sent down upon you manna and the quails, (73) (saying): “Eat of the good wherewithal that We have provided you as sustenance.” And by their sinning (your forefathers) did not wrong Us: it is they themselves whom they wronged.

(72) That is, God provided them with shade from clouds in the Sinai peninsula where there was no shelter from the heat of the sun.

It should be remembered that the Israelites had left Egypt in their hundreds of thousands. In Sinai, there were not even any tents in which they could shelter, never mind proper houses. But for the fact that God by His grace kept the sky, overcast for a

considerable period, these people would have been scorched to death by the heat of the sun.

(73) Manna and quails constituted the natural food that was continually made available to them throughout the forty years of their wandering in the Sinai desert. Manna was like coriander seed. When the dew fell in the night, manna fell with it from above. By God's grace the quails were made available so plentifully that the entire nation was able to live on them alone and so escaped starvation. (For details regarding manna and quails see Exodus 16; Numbers 11: 7-9 and 31-2; Joshua 5: 12)

وَ اِذْ قُلْنَا ادْخُلُوْا هٰذِ الْقَرْيَةَ فَكُلُوْا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ رَغَدًا وَّادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا وَّقُوْلُوْا حِطَّةٌ نَّغْفِرْلَكُمْ خَطٰيٰكُمْ ؕ وَسَنَزِيْدُ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ۵۸

(2-58) And recall when We said: “Go into this town (74) and eat abundantly of its food; but enter the gate prostrate, saying, “Repentance”. (75) We will forgive you your sins and shall bestow more favor on the doers of good.”

(74) It has not yet been possible to arrive at any conclusion about the identity of the locality mentioned here. The series of events in the context of which God's command to enter the city is mentioned belong to the period of the exodus of the Children of Israel in the Sinai peninsula. It is therefore probable that the place mentioned in this verse is some Sinaitic city. Another plausible suggestion is that it is Shattim, which was located opposite Jericho on the eastern bank of the river Jordan. According to the Bible the Israelites conquered this town during the last years of the life of Moses. After the conquest the Israelites became so decadent that God smote them with a plague from which twenty-four thousand died (Numbers 25: 1-9).

(75) God's command was to enter the city not with the arrogance of tyrannical conquerors, but with the humility of men of God (in the manner in which the Prophet would later enter Makka at the time of its conquest).

As for 'hittah', it could either mean that when they entered the town they should seek God's pardon for their sins or that instead of plundering and massacring people in the wake of their conquest, they should proclaim an amnesty.

فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا قَوْلًا غَيْرَ الَّذِيْ قِيْلَ لَهُمْ فَاَنْزَلْنَا عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا رِجْزًا مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَفْسُقُوْنَ ۵۹

(2-59) Then the wrong-doers substituted another saying for that which had been given them; and so We sent down a scourge upon the wrong-doers from the heavens for their transgression.

وَ اِذِ اسْتَسْقٰى مُوْسٰى لِقَوْمِهٖ فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبْ بِّعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ ؕ فَانْۢبَجَسَتْ مِنْهُ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْنًا ؕ قَدْ عَلِمَ كُلُّ اُنَاسٍ مَّشْرَبَهُمْ ؕ كُلُوْا وَاشْرَبُوْا مِنْ رِّزْقِ اللّٰهِ وَلَا تَعْثَوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ مُفْسِدِيْنَ ۶۰

(2-60) And recall when Moses prayed for water for his people and We replied: “Strike the rock with your staff.” And there gushed out from it twelve springs (76) and each tribe knew its drinking-place. (Then you were directed): “Eat and drink of the sustenance provided by Allah, and do not go about acting wickedly on earth, spreading mischief.”

(76) That rock can still be seen in the Sinai Peninsula with the twelve holes of the springs. Twelve springs were caused to flow for the Israelites in order to avoid water disputes among their twelve clans.

وَ اِذْ قُلْتُمْ يٰمُوْسٰى لَنْ نَّصْبِرَ عَلٰى طَعَامٍ وَّاحِدٍ فَادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُخْرِجْ لَنَا مِمَّا تُنْۢبِتُ الْاَرْضُ مِنْۢ بَقْلِهَا وَقِثَّآئِهَا وَفُوْمِهَا وَعَدَسِهَا وَبَصَلِهَا ؕ قَالَ اَتَسْتَبْدِلُوْنَ الَّذِىْ هُوَ اَدْنٰى بِالَّذِىْ هُوَ خَيْرٌ ؕ اِهْبِطُوْا مِصْرًا فَاِنَّ لَكُمْ مَّا سَاَلْتُمْ ؕ وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذِّلَّةُ وَالْمَسْكَنَةُ ۞ وَبَآءُوْ بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا يَكْفُرُوْنَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَيَقْتُلُوْنَ النَّبِيّٖنَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَّكَانُوْا يَعْتَدُوْنَ ۶۱

(2-61) And recall when you said: “O Moses, surely we cannot put up with one sort of food, so pray to your Lord to bring out for us what the earth produces – its herbs and its cucumbers and its corn and its lentils and its garlic and its onions.” Then Moses said: “Will you take a meaner thing in exchange for what is better? (77) Go down to some city and there you shall get what you ask for.” And ignominy and wretchedness were pitched upon them and they were laden with the burden of Allah’s wrath. This was because they denied the Signs of Allah (78) and slew the Prophets unrightfully. (79) All this, because they disobeyed and persistently exceeded the limits (of the Law).

(77) This does not mean that their real fault lay in asking for things which entailed cultivation instead of availing themselves of manna and quails which they received without any toil. What is emphasized here is that rather than being concerned with the great purpose for which they had been brought to the Sinai they relished the foods which gratified their palates to such a degree that they could not forgo them even temporarily (cf. Numbers 11: 4-9).

(78) There are several ways in which one might deny the signs of God. First, one might refuse to accept those teachings of God which one found contrary to one's fancies and desires. Second, one might know that something is from God and yet willfully flout it. Third, one might know well the import of God's directives and yet distort them.

(79) The Israelites recorded their crimes in detail in their own history. Here are just a few examples from the Bible:

> (1) After the death of Solomon the state of the Israelites was split into two: the State of Judah with its capital in Jerusalem, and the State of Israel with its capital in Samaria. This was followed by a series of wars between the two States so that the State of Judah sought the assistance of the Aramacan State of Damascus against its own kinsmen. At this, Hamani the seer went under God's direction to Asa the king and rebuked him. Instead of

rectifying his behavior, Asa was so angry that he put the seer in the stocks. (See 2 Chronicles 16: 7-10.)

(2) When Elijah denounced the Jews for their worship of Baal and invited them to return to monotheism, Ahab, the king of Israel pursued him for the sake of his pagan wife so that he had to take refuge in the mountains of the Sinai peninsula. On this occasion, according to the Bible, he said: '. . . the people of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thy altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword., and 1, even 1 only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away' (1 Kings 19: 14).

(3) The same king Ahab imprisoned another Prophet, Micah, for no other reason than that of speaking the truth. King Ahab ordered that he should be given only bread and water. (See 1 Kings 22- 26-7)

(4) When idol-worship and moral corruption became prevalent in Judah and the Prophet Zechariah raised his voice against them, he was stoned to death in the very court of the house of the Lord. (See 2 Chronicles 24: 2l.)

(5) When the Israelite State of Samaria was wiped out by the State of Jerusalem, the Prophet Jeremiah deplored the condition of the Israelites. He warned them that it was time they set about mending their ways otherwise they would face an even more calamitous end than that of Samaria. The response to this sincere preaching was abuse and curses: he was beaten, imprisoned, put in the stocks and lowered by ropes into a cistern, where he was left to die of hunger and thirst. He was also accused of various crimes, including treason and conspiracy. (See Jeremiah 15: 10; 18: 20-3; 20: 1-18; 36-40)

(6) It is reported of another Prophet, Amos, that when he denounced the widespread errors and corruption in the State of Samaria and warned of the evil consequences that follow such misdeeds, he was condemned to exile and told

to pursue his prophetic task somewhere beyond its frontiers. (See Amos 7: 10-13.)

(7) When John the Baptist protested against the acts of moral corruption that were brazenly practised in his court, Herod, the ruler of Judah, first put John into prison, then had him beheaded at the request of a dancing girl, and had his head set on a platter and presented to the girl. (See Mark 6: 17-29)

(8) The same hostility to Prophets is evident from the life of Jesus. The priests and political leaders of Israel ultimately became inflamed against Jesus, who criticized them for their impiety and hypocrisy and invited them to true faith and righteousness. It was this which prompted them to prepare a false case against him and persuade the Romans to sign a death sentence. Later, when the Roman governor, Pilate, asked them which of the two prisoners - Jesus or Barabbas, a notorious brigand - should be released on the occasion of the feast, they asked for the release of Barabbas and for the crucifixion of Jesus (Matthew 27: 20-6). This is a shameful chapter in the record of the Jewish nation, to which the Quran refers here in passing. It is evident that when a nation chooses its most notoriously criminal and wicked people for positions of leadership, and its righteous and holy men for goal and the scaffold, God has no alternative but to lay His curse and damnation on that nation.

اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَالَّذِيۡنَ هَادُوۡا وَالنَّصٰرٰى وَالصّٰبِـُٔوۡنَ مَنۡ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالۡيَوۡمِ الۡاٰخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمۡ اَجۡرُهُمۡ عِنۡدَ رَبِّهِمۡ وَلَا خَوۡفٌ عَلَيۡهِمۡ وَلَا هُمۡ يَحۡزَنُوۡنَ ﴿۶۲﴾

(2-62) Whether they are the ones who believe (in the Arabian Prophet), or whether they are Jews, Christians or Sabians – all who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and do righteous deeds – their reward is surely secure with their Lord; they need have no fear, nor shall they grieve. (80)

(80) The context of the verse makes it clear that it is not attempting to enumerate in detail all the articles of faith in which one should believe, or all the principles of conduct which one should follow in order to merit reward from God. These matters are mentioned elsewhere, in their appropriate places. The aim of the verse is merely to repudiate the illusion cherished by the Jews that, by virtue of their being Jews, they have a monopoly of salvation. They had long entertained the notion that a special and exclusive relationship existed between them and God. They thought, therefore, that all who belonged to their group were predestined to salvation regardless of their beliefs and actions,. whereas all non-Jews were predestined to serve as fodder for hell-fire.

To clarify this misgiving the Jews are told that what really matters in the sight of God is true faith and good deeds rather than formal affiliation with a certain religious community. Whoever has true faith and good deeds to his credit is bound to receive his reward, since God will judge people on the basis of merit rather than on the grounds that a man's name happens to be listed in the world as a member of one religious community or the other.

وَ اِذْ اَخَذْنَا مِ ۡثَقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّ رَ ۡ خُوْ ا ط اٰتَ ۡ نٰكُمْ بِقُوَّ وَّاذْكُرُوْا مَا فِ ۡ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿۶۳﴾

(2-63) And recall when We made a covenant with you and caused the Mount Sinai to tower above you, (81) (saying): “Hold fast to the Book that We have given you, and remember the directives and commandments in it, that you be pious.”

(81) From the manner in which this incident is described at various places in the Quran it is obvious that, at that time, it was quite well known to the Israelites. It is difficult, however, after the Passage of many centuries to be able to speak with certainty

about the precise nature of the incident. All we can say is that while the Children of Israel were making their covenant in the shadow of Mount Sinai, they witnessed an awesome phenomenon and felt as if the mountain was about to fall upon them. (Verse 171 of Surah al-Araf) seems to portray this. See also (n. 132 in that surah.)

ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيۡتُمۡ مِّنۡۢ بَعۡدِ ذٰلِكَ فَلَوۡلَا فَضۡلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيۡكُمۡ وَرَحۡمَتُهٗ لَكُنۡتُمۡ مِّنَ الۡخٰسِرِيۡنَ ﴿۶۴﴾

(2-64) Then you turned away from your covenant, and had it not been for Allah's grace and mercy upon you, you would have long been utter losers.

وَلَقَدۡ عَلِمۡتُمُ الَّذِيۡنَ اعۡتَدَوۡا مِنۡكُمۡ فِى السَّبۡتِ فَقُلۡنَا لَهُمۡ كُوۡنُوۡا قِرَدَةً خٰسِـِٔيۡنَ ﴿۶۵﴾

(2-65) And you know the case of those of you who broke the Sabbath,(82) how We said to them: "Become apes, despised and hated." (83)

(82) Sabbath, i.e., Saturday . It was laid down that the Israelite should consecrate that day for rest and worship. They were required to from abstain from all worldly acts, including cooking (which they might neither do themselves, nor have their servants do for them). The injunctions, in this connection were so strict that violation of the Sabbath was to be punished with death. (See Exodus 31:12-17. ) When religious and moral decadence, however, spread among the Israelites they indulged in open desecration of the Sabbath, so much so that in Jewish towns trade and commerce were carried out in broad daylight.

(83) The details of this incident are mentioned later in (Surah 7, vv. 163) . The exact manner in which their transformation into apes took place is disputed. Some scholars are of the opinion that the transformation was a physical one, while others hold that they were invested with the attributes characteristic of apes. But both the words and the manner in which this incident is recounted in the Quran seem to suggest that what took place was a physical

transformation of certain persons into apes rather than just a moral metamorphosis. What seems plausible to me is that while their minds were allowed to remain intact, their bodies were changed into those of apes.

فَجَعَلْنٰهَا نَكَالًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهَا وَمَا خَلْفَهَا وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾

(2-66) And thus We made their end a warning for the people of their own time and for the succeeding generations, and an admonition to the God-fearing.

وَاِذْ قَالَ مُوْسٰى لِقَوْمِهٖٓ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَاْمُرُكُمْ اَنْ تَذْبَحُوْا بَقَرَةً ؕ قَالُوْٓا اَتَتَّخِذُنَا هُزُوًا ؕ قَالَ اَعُوْذُ بِاللّٰهِ اَنْ اَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْجٰهِلِيْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾

(2-67) And then recall when Moses said to his people: “Behold, Allah commands you to slaughter a cow.” They said: “Are you jesting with us?” Moses answered: “I seek refuge in Allah that I should behave in the manner of the ignorant.”

قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَّنَا مَا هِيَ ؕ قَالَ اِنَّهٗ يَقُوْلُ اِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ لَّا فَارِضٌ وَّلَا بِكْرٌ ؕ عَوَانٌۢ بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ ؕ فَافْعَلُوْا مَا تُؤْمَرُوْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾

(2-68) They said: “Pray to your Lord that He make clear to us what she is like.” Moses answered: “He says, she is a cow, neither old nor immature, but of an age in between the two. Do, then, what you have been commanded.”

قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَّنَا مَا لَوْنُهَا ؕ قَالَ اِنَّهٗ يَقُوْلُ اِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ صَفْرَآءُ فَاقِعٌ لَّوْنُهَا تَسُرُّ النّٰظِرِيْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾

(2-69) They said: “Pray to your Lord that He make clear to us of what color she is.” Moses answered: “He says, she is a yellow cow, with a bright color which is pleasing to those who see!”

قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَّنَا مَا هِيَ ۚ اِنَّ الْبَقَرَ تَشٰبَهَ عَلَيْنَا ۭ وَ اِنَّآ اِنْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَمُهْتَدُوْنَ ۝٧٠

(2-70) They said: “Pray to your Lord that He make clear to us what cow she is. Cows seem much alike to us, and if Allah wills, we shall be guided.” (84)

(84) Through contact with neighboring peoples, the Israelites had become infested with the attitude of sanctifying the cow, in fact they had even become accustomed to cow-worship. In order to disabuse the Jews of this, they were ordered to slaughter the cow. Their professed belief that God alone was worthy of worship could be tested only by making them slaughter with their own hands what they had formerly worshipped. This test was indeed a hard one since their hearts were not fully imbued with faith. Hence, they tried to shelve the issue by resorting to enquiries about the kind of animal they were required to slaughter. But the more they enquired, the narrower the strait became for them, until the indications were as obvious as if someone had put his finger precisely on the particular animal they were required to slaughter - the animal which had for so long been an object of their worship. The Old Testament also mentions the incident, but there is no reference to the manner in which the Jews tried to evade the matter. (See Numbers 19: 1-10.)

قَالَ اِنَّهٗ يَقُوْلُ اِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ لَّا ذَلُوْلٌ تُثِيْرُ الْاَرْضَ وَلَا تَسْقِى الْحَرْثَ ۚ مُسَلَّمَةٌ لَّا شِيَةَ فِيْهَا ۭ قَالُوا الْـٰٔنَ جِئْتَ بِالْحَقِّ ۭ فَذَبَحُوْهَا وَمَا كَادُوْا يَفْعَلُوْنَ ۝٧١

(2-71) Moses answered: “Lo! He says, she is a cow unyoked to plough the earth or to water the tillage, one that has been kept secure, with no blemish on her!” Thereupon they cried out: “Now you have come forth with the information that will direct us a right.” And they slaughtered her although they scarcely seemed to do so.

وَ اِذْ قَتَلْتُمْ نَفْسًا فَادّٰرَءْتُمْ فِيْهَا ۭ وَاللّٰهُ مُخْرِجٌ مَّا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُوْنَ ۝٧٢

(2-72) And recall when you killed a man and then began to remonstrate and cast the blame (of killing) upon one another even though Allah was determined to bring to light what you were hiding.

فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبُوْهُ بِبَعْضِهَا ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يُحْيِ اللّٰهُ الْمَوْتٰى ۙ وَيُرِيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ ۝٧٣

(2-73) Then We ordered: “Smite the corpse with a part of it.” Thus does Allah bring the dead to life and thus does He show His Signs that you might understand. (85)

(85) At least one thing becomes clear from this statement: that the slain person was restored to life at least long enough to indicate his assassins. But the actual words in which the order 'smite the corpse with a part of it' is couched tend to create a measure of ambiguity. Nevertheless, the meaning inferred by the early Quranic commentators - that the order was to smite the slain man's body with some part of the slaughtered cow - seems to me plausible. Two birds were thus killed with one stone: first, they were made to behold a sign of God's power; and second, the notion that the cow possessed any holiness or sanctity was shattered. For if the of the object of their worship - the cow - had any supernatural power, some calamity should have visited them as a consequence of slaughtering it. But no calamity took place. On the contrary, killing the cow seemed to be beneficial insofar as striking a dead man with a part of it brought him back to life.

ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوْبُكُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ اَوْ اَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً ؕ وَ اِنَّ مِنَ الْحِجَارَةِ لَمَا يَتَفَجَّرُ مِنْهُ الْاَنْهٰرُ ؕ وَ اِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَشَّقَّقُ فَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْمَآءُ ؕ وَ اِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَمَا اللّٰهُ بِغٰفِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ۝٧٤

(2-74) Then (even after observing this) your hearts hardened and became like stones, or even harder. For surely there are some stones from which streams burst forth and some

that split asunder and water issues out, and some that crash down for fear of Allah. Allah is not heedless of the things you do.

اَفَتَطْمَعُوْ نَ اَنْ يُّؤْمِنُوْ ا لَكُمْ وَقَدْ كَانَ فَرِيْقٌ مِّنْ ْمْ يَسْمَعُوْنَ كَلٰمَ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ يُحَرِّفُوْنَهٗ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا عَقَلُوْهُ وَ ْمْ يَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝٧٥

(2-75) Do you hope that these people will believe in the Message you are preaching, [86] even though a party of them has been wont to listen to the Word of Allah and after they had fully grasped it, knowingly distorted it? [87]

(86) This is addressed to the converts of Madinah, who had then lately embraced the faith of the Arabian Prophet. These people had some vague notions about Prophethood, Heavenly Scriptures, Angels, the After-life, Divine Law and so on, and for this they were indebted to their Jewish neighbors. It was from these same Jewish neighbors that they had heard that another Prophet was about to appear, and that his followers would prevail over the rest of the world.

It was partly because of this background that when the people of Madinah heard about the Prophet, they readily turned towards him and embraced Islam in large numbers. They naturally expected that those who already followed Prophets and Divine Scriptures, and who, by introducing them to these ideas had contributed to their embracing the true faith, would not only join the ranks of the true believers, but would even be amongst their vanguard. As a result of these expectations the enthusiastic Muslim converts approached their Jewish friends and neighbors and invited them to embrace Islam. When the Jews flatly declined to do so, this negative reply was exploited by the hypocrites and other enemies of Islam as an argument for creating doubts about the truth of Islam.

If Muhammad was the true Prophet, they argued, how was it conceivable that the Jewish scholars and divines would deliberately turn away from him since, if he was a true Prophet, such a behavior would be tantamount to ruining their After-life? Here the simple-hearted Muslims learn of the historical record of

the Jews, a record which is replete with perversion and corruption. This was designed to make them realize that they ought not to expect too much of a people with so dark a past, for if they were not realistic in their expectations about them they would be utterly disappointed when their call failed to penetrate their hardened and stony hearts. Their chronic decadence had a history of several centuries. For a long time they had treated those verses of the Scriptures which made sincere believers tremble in awe as objects of jest and play. They had tailored religion to suit their base desires and it was around such a perverted view of religion that all their hopes of salvation were centered. It was futile to hope that such people would flock to the call of Truth the moment it was proclaimed.

(87) 'A party of them' refers to the scholars and religious doctors of the Jewish community. The' Word of God' here signifies the Torah, the Psalms (**Zabur**) and other Scriptures which the Jews had received through the Prophets. 'Distortion' denotes the attempt to twist a text in such a manner as to make it signify something different from its real meaning, and may also denote tampering with the text of the Scriptures. The Israelite scholars had subjected the Scriptures to distortions of both kinds.

وَ اِذَا لَقُوا الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡۤا قَالُوۡۤا اٰمَنَّا ۚ وَ اِذَا خَلَا بَعۡضُہُمۡ اِلٰی بَعۡضٍ قَالُوۡۤا اَتُحَدِّثُوۡنَہُمۡ بِمَا فَتَحَ اللّٰہُ عَلَیۡکُمۡ لِیُحَآجُّوۡکُمۡ بِہٖ عِنۡدَ رَبِّکُمۡ ؕ اَفَلَا تَعۡقِلُوۡنَ ۷۶

(2-76) And when they meet those who believe (in Muhammad) they say: “We too believe in him.” But in their intimate meetings they say to one another: “How foolish! Why should you intimate to them what Allah has revealed to you, for they will use it as argument against you before your Lord?” (88)

(88) When the Jews talked among themselves they asked their co-religionists to disclose to the Muslims neither the prophesies about the Prophet, nor those verses of the Scriptures on the basis of which they could be reproached for their evil conduct; they thought that the Muslims would make use of scriptural arguments

against them before God, and would thus have them pronounced guilty. These were the depths to which Jewish religious decadence had sunk. They were convinced that if they could succeed in concealing their guilt in this world, they would be saved from censure in the Next. For this reason they were asked if they considered God to be unaware of their deeds, either apparent or hidden.

اَوَلَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّوْنَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُوْنَ ۝٧٧

(2-77) Are they unaware that Allah knows all that they hide and all that they disclose?

وَمِنْهُمْ اُمِّيُّوْنَ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ الْكِتٰبَ اِلَّآ اَمَانِيَّ وَاِنْ هُمْ اِلَّا يَظُنُّوْنَ ۝٧٨

(2-78) Among them are also the unlettered folk who do not know about the Scriptures but cherish baseless wishes and merely follow their conjectures. (89)

(89) This was the state of the Jewish masses. They were ignorant of the Scriptures, unaware of the principles of faith as enunciated by God in His Book, unaware of the rules of conduct that He had laid down, and of the teachings which are of fundamental importance for man's salvation. Because they lacked this knowledge, they fabricated a whole religion out of their desires and fancies, living in a paradise built on false hopes and illusions.

فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ يَكْتُبُوْنَ الْكِتٰبَ بِاَيْدِيْهِمْ ۗ ثُمَّ يَقُوْلُوْنَ هٰذَا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ لِيَشْتَرُوْا بِهٖ ثَمَنًا قَلِيْلًا ۗ فَوَيْلٌ لَّهُمْ مِّمَّا كَتَبَتْ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَوَيْلٌ لَّهُمْ مِّمَّا يَكْسِبُوْنَ ۝٧٩

(2-79) Woe, then, to those who write out the Scriptures with their own hands and then, in order to make a trifling gain, claim: “This is from Allah.” (90) Woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for what they thus earn.

(90) These observations relate to their rabbis. They were not content with misinterpreting the Word of God. They also interjected into it their readings of the Scriptures and their explanatory comments thereof, stories from their national history, superstitious ideas and fancies, philosophical doctrines and legal rules. The result was that the Divine and the human became inextricably mixed. They claimed, nevertheless, that the entire thing was divine! Every historical anecdote, the interpretation of every commentator, the doctrine of every theologian, and the legal deduction of every jurist that managed to find its way into the Bible became the 'Word of God'. It was thus obligatory to believe in all that, and every deviation from it became tantamount to deviation from the true faith.

وَقَالُوا لَنْ تَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ اِلَّآ اَيَّامًا مَّعْدُوْدَةً ۭ قُلْ اَتَّخَذْتُمْ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ عَهْدًا فَلَنْ يُّخْلِفَ اللّٰهُ عَهْدَهٗٓ اَمْ تَقُوْلُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۸۰

(2-80) They say: “The Fire will certainly not touch us except for a limited number of days.” (91) Say (to them): “Have you received a promise from Allah – for Allah never breaks His promise – or do you attribute to Allah something about which you have no knowledge?”

(91) This is a misconception entertained by all Jews, laymen as well as rabbis. They felt sure that no matter what they did, they would remain immune from hell-fire just by virtue of being Jews! The worst they could conceive of was the possibility of a transient punishment before they were transported to heaven.

بَلٰى مَنْ كَسَبَ سَيِّئَةً وَّاَحَاطَتْ بِهٖ خَطِيْۗـَٔتُهٗ فَاُولٰۗىِٕكَ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ۸۱

(2-81) Those who earn evil and are encompassed by their sinfulness are the people of the Fire, and there will they abide;

وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَنَّةِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿٨٢﴾

(2-82) those who believe and do righteous deeds are the people of the Garden, and there will they abide.

وَاِذْ اَخَذْنَا مِيْثَاقَ بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ لَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ اِلَّا اللّٰهَ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ اِحْسَانًا وَّذِى الْقُرْبٰى وَالْيَتٰمٰى وَالْمَسٰكِيْنِ وَقُوْلُوْا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا وَّاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ ۭ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا مِّنْكُمْ وَاَنْتُمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ ﴿٨٣﴾

(2-83) And recall when We made a covenant with the Children of Israel: “You shall serve none but Allah and do good to parents, kinsmen, orphans and the needy; you shall speak kindly to people, and establish Prayer and give Zakah (Purifying Alms). And yet, except for a few of you, you turned back on this covenant, and you are still backsliders.

وَاِذْ اَخَذْنَا مِيْثَاقَكُمْ لَا تَسْفِكُوْنَ دِمَآءَكُمْ وَلَا تُخْرِجُوْنَ اَنْفُسَكُمْ مِّنْ دِيَارِكُمْ ثُمَّ اَقْرَرْتُمْ وَاَنْتُمْ تَشْهَدُوْنَ ﴿٨٤﴾

(2-84) And recall when We made a covenant with you, that you shall not shed one another’s blood, and shall not turn out one another from your homelands; you confirmed it, and you yourselves are witnesses to it.

ثُمَّ اَنْتُمْ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ تَقْتُلُوْنَ اَنْفُسَكُمْ وَتُخْرِجُوْنَ فَرِيْقًا مِّنْكُمْ مِّنْ دِيَارِهِمْ تَظٰهَرُوْنَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِالْاِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ ۭ وَاِنْ يَّاْتُوْكُمْ اُسٰرٰى تُفٰدُوْهُمْ وَهُوَ مُحَرَّمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ اِخْرَاجُهُمْ ۭ اَفَتُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِبَعْضِ الْكِتٰبِ وَتَكْفُرُوْنَ بِبَعْضٍ ۚ فَمَا جَزَاۗءُ مَنْ يَّفْعَلُ ذٰلِكَ مِنْكُمْ اِلَّا خِزْيٌ فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ يُرَدُّوْنَ اِلٰٓى اَشَدِّ الْعَذَابِ ۭ وَمَا اللّٰهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٨٥﴾

(2-85) And here you are, killing one another, turning out a party of your own from their homelands, aiding one another against them in sin and enmity, and if they come to you as captives you ransom them although the very act of expelling them was unlawful to you. Do you believe in a part of the Scripture and reject the rest? (92) What else, then, could be the retribution of those among you who do this than that they should

live in degradation in the present life, and that on the Day of Resurrection they should be sent to the severest chastisement? Allah is not heedless of what you do.

(92) Before the advent of the Prophet (peace be on him) the Jewish tribes who lived on the outskirts of Madinah had concluded an alliance with the Arab tribes of Aws and Khazraj. When the Arab tribes fought against one another each Jewish tribe fought on the side of its allies, which led to fratricide and so to a flagrant violation of the Book of God. Moreover, when the war ended the captives were ransomed. This ransom was justified on the basis of scriptural arguments; they extolled the Word of God when it permitted the ransom of prisoners of war, but attached no significance at all to the same Word of God when it prohibited mutual feuding.

أُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوُا الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالْاٰخِرَةِ فَلَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنْصَرُونَ ﴿٨٦﴾

(2-86) These are the ones who have bought the present life in exchange for the World to Come. Their chastisement shall not be lightened, nor shall they be helped.

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتٰبَ وَقَفَّيْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهٖ بِالرُّسُلِ وَاٰتَيْنَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنٰتِ وَاَيَّدْنٰهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ ؕ اَفَكُلَّمَا جَآءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ بِمَا لَا تَهْوٰٓى اَنْفُسُكُمُ اسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ فَفَرِيقًا كَذَّبْتُمْ وَفَرِيقًا تَقْتُلُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾

(2-87) Surely We gave Moses the Scripture and caused a train of Messengers to follow him and then sent Jesus, the son of Mary, with Clear Proofs and supported him with the spirit of holiness. (93) But is it not true that every time a Messenger brought to you something that was not to your liking, you acted arrogantly: you called some Messengers liars and killed others?

(93) The 'spirit of holiness' signifies the knowledge derived through revelation. It also signifies the angel Gabriel who brought

this revelation. It also denotes the holy spirit of Jesus, the spirit which God had endowed with angelic character.

The expression 'clear proofs' refers to those signs which are likely to convince a truth-seeking and truth-loving person that Jesus is a Prophet of God.

وَقَالُوا قُلُوبُنَا غُلْفٌ ۚ بَل لَّعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَقَلِيلًا مَّا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾

(2-88) They say: “Our hearts are well-protected.” (94) No! The fact is that Allah has cursed them because of their denying the Truth. So, scarcely do they believe.

(94) They said, in effect, that they were so staunch in their beliefs that their convictions would remain unaffected regardless of what was said. Such a claim is the hallmark of those bigots whose minds are seized by irrational prejudice. Nothing can be a matter of greater shame for human beings than the so-called firmness of conviction which they often boast of. What can be more foolish than adherence to inherited beliefs and convictions when their falseness is established by overwhelmingly strong arguments?

وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ كِتَابٌ مِّنْ عِندِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ وَكَانُوا مِن قَبْلُ يَسْتَفْتِحُونَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُم مَّا عَرَفُوا كَفَرُوا بِهِ ۚ فَلَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٨٩﴾

(2-89) And now that there has come to them a Book from Allah, how are they treating it? Even though it confirms the Truth already in their possession, and even though they had prayed for victory against the unbelievers, and yet when that Book came to them – and they recognized it – they refused to acknowledge its Truth. (95) Allah’s curse be upon the unbelievers.

(95) Before the advent of the Prophet, the Jews were eagerly awaiting a Prophet whose coming had been prophesied by their own Prophets. In fact, the Jews used to pray for his advent so that the dominance of the unbelievers could come to an end and the age of their own dominance he ushered in. The people of Madinah were witnesses to the fact that these same Jewish neighbors of theirs had yearned for the advent of such a Prophet. They often used to say: 'People may oppress us today as they wish, but when our awaited Prophet comes, we will settle our scores with our oppressors.'

Since the people of Madinah had themselves heard such statements they were inclined to embrace the religion of the Prophet all the more readily lest their Jewish neighbors supersede them in acquiring this honor. It was therefore astonishing for them to find that when the promised Prophet did appear those same Jews who had so eagerly looked forward to welcoming him turned into his greatest enemies.

The statement 'and they recognized it' is confirmed by several contemporaneous events. The most authentic evidence in this connection is that of Safiyah, a wife of the Prophet, who was herself the daughter of one learned Jewish scholar (Huyayy b. Akhtab) and the niece of another (Abu Yasir). She says that when the Prophet migrated to Madinah both her father and uncle went to meet him and conversed with him for quite a while. When they returned home, she heard the following conversation:
Uncle: Is he really the same Prophet whose advent has been prophesied in our Scriptures?
Father: By God, he is. Uncle: Do you believe that? Father: Yes. Uncle. Then what do you intend to do? Father: 1 will continue to oppose him and will not let his claim prevail as long as I live.
(Ibn Hishim, Sirah, eds., Mustafa al-Saqqa' et al., 2 vols., II edition, Cairo, 137511955, see vol. 1, pp. 518 f. See also Ibn IshAq, The Life of Muhammad, tr. and notes by A. Guillaume, London, Oxford University Press, 1955, pp. 241 f. - Ed.)

بِئْسَمَا اشْتَرَوْا بِهٖٓ اَنْفُسَهُمْ اَنْ يَّكْفُرُوْا بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ بَغْيًا اَنْ يُّنَزِّلَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ عَلٰى مَنْ يَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖ فَبَآءُوْ بِغَضَبٍ عَلٰى غَضَبٍ ۭ وَلِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيْنٌ ۹۰

(2-90) Evil indeed is what they console themselves with. (96) They deny the guidance revealed by Allah, grudging that He chose to bestow His gracious bounty (of revelation and prophethood) on some of His servants whom He willed. (97) Thus they have brought on themselves wrath after wrath, and a humiliating chastisement is in store for such unbelievers.

(96) Another possible rendering of the same verse is: 'And how evil is that for the sake of which they have sold themselves', i.e. for the sake of which they have sacrificed their ultimate happiness and salvation.

(97) They had longed for the promised Prophet to arise from among their own people. But when he arose among a different people, a people they despised, they decided to reject him. It was as if they thought God was duty-bound to consult them in appointing Prophets, and since in this case He had failed to do so they felt they had a right to be offended by God's 'arbitrariness'.

وَاِذَا قِيْلَ لَهُمْ اٰمِنُوْا بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ قَالُوْا نُؤْمِنُ بِمَآ اُنْزِلَ عَلَيْنَا وَيَكْفُرُوْنَ بِمَا وَرَاۗءَهٗ ۭ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ ۭ قُلْ فَلِمَ تَقْتُلُوْنَ اَنْۢبِيَاۗءَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ۹۱

(2-91) When they are told: “Believe in what Allah has revealed,” they say: “We believe only in what was revealed to us (Israel).” They deny everything else even though it be the Truth which confirms what they possess. Say (to them): “If indeed you are believers, why is it that in the past you killed the Prophets of Allah (who were from Israel)?”

وَلَقَدْ جَاۗءَكُمْ مُّوْسٰى بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ وَاَنْتُمْ ظٰلِمُوْنَ ۹۲

(2-92) Moses came to you with clear proofs and yet you were so wont to wrong-doing that as soon as he was gone you took to worshipping the calf.

وَ اِذْ اَخَذْنَا مِ ثٰقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّ رَ خُذُوا مَ اٰتَ نٰكُمْ بِقُوَّ وَّاسْمَعُوا ؕ قَالُوْا
سَمِعْنَا وَعَصَ يْنَا ۞ وَاُشْرِبُ ا فِ قُلُوْمُ الْعِجْلَ بِكُفْرِ مْ ؕ قُلْ بِئْسَمَا يَمُرُكُمْ بِ اِيْمٰنُكُمْ
اِ ن كُ نْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِ نَ ۹۳

(2-93) Recall the covenant We made with you and caused the Mount to tower above you, stressing: “Hold to what We have given you with full strength and give heed to it.” But their forefathers said: “We hear, but we disobey” – for their hearts were overflowing with love for the calf because of their unbelief. Say: “If you are people of faith, then evil are the things that your faith enjoins upon you.”

قُلْ اِ كَانَتْ لَكُمُ الدَّارُ الْاٰخِرَ عِدَ الِ خَالِصَ مِّ وُ نِ النَّاسِ فَتَمَنَّوُا الْمَوْتَ اِ كُنْتُمْ
صٰدِقِي نَ ۹۴

(2-94) Say to them: “If indeed the Last Abode with Allah is yours, in exclusion of other people, then long for death [98] if you are truthful.”

(98) This is a subtle, satirical reference to their excessive worldliness. Those who really care for the Hereafter neither set their hearts on earthly life, nor are they unduly frightened of death. The condition of the Jews was the reverse of this.

وَلَ يَتَمَنَّوْنَ ٗ اَ دًا بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ اَ دِ هِمْ ؕ وَاللّٰ عَلِ يْم بِالظّٰلِمِ ۹۵

(2-95) But they shall never long for it because of the (evil) deeds they have committed; Allah is well aware of the wrong-doers.

وَلَتَجِدَنَّهُمْ اَحْرَصَ النَّاسِ عَلٰى حَيٰوةٍ وَمِنَ الَّذِ نَ اَشْرَكُوْا يَوَدُّ اَحَدُهُمْ لَوْ يُعَمَّرُ اَلْفَ سَنَةٍ
وَمَا هُوَ بِمُزَحْزِحِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ اَ يُّعَمَّرَ ؕ وَاللّٰ بَصِير بِمَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ۹۶

(2-96) You will certainly find them most eager to cling on to life, [99] indeed even more eager than those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity. Each one of them wishes to live a thousand years although the bestowal of long life cannot remove him from chastisement. Allah sees whatever they do.

(99) The Arabic text implies that the Jews were so frightened of death and so keen to remain alive that they did not mind whether they led an honorable and dignified existence, or whether their life was one of indignity and humiliation.

قُلْ مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِّجِبْرِيلَ فَإِنَّهُ نَزَّلَهُ عَلَىٰ قَلْبِكَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَهُدًى وَبُشْرَىٰ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ٩٧

(2-97) Say: "Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel [100] (should know that) he revealed this (Quran) to your heart by Allah's [101] leave: it confirms the Scriptures revealed before it, [102] and is a guidance and good tiding to the people of faith. [103]

(100) The Jews not only reviled the Prophet (peace be on him) and his followers but also God's chosen angel, Gabriel, denouncing him as their enemy, and branding him as the angel of curse rather than of blessing.

(101) Since Gabriel communicated the revealed messages with God's approval the abuses of the Jews which were apparently aimed at Gabriel should be considered as directed at God.

(102) They abused Gabriel because he had brought the Quran from God, and since the Quran on the whole confirms the Torah this too became a co-sharer in those abuses.

(103) Here there is a subtle suggestion that the wrath of the Jews was, in fact, directed against true guidance and righteousness even though acceptance of these would have brought them good tidings as to their own success.

مَن كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِّلّٰهِ وَمَلٰٓئِكَتِهٖ وَرُسُلِهٖ وَجِبْرِيلَ وَمِيكٰىلَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَدُوٌّ لِّلْكٰفِرِينَ ٩٨

(2-98) (And if this is the cause of their hostility to Gabriel, let them know) whoever is an enemy to Allah, His Angels and His Messengers and to Gabriel and Michael will surely find Allah an enemy to such unbelievers."

وَلَقَدْ اَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكَ اٰيٰتٍۭ بَيِّنٰتٍ وَمَا يَكْفُرُ بِهَآ اِلَّا الْفٰسِقُونَ ٩٩

(2-99) We surely sent down to you clear verses that elucidate the Truth, (verses) which only the transgressors reject as false.

اَوَكُلَّمَا عٰهَدُوْا عَهْدًا نَّبَذَهٗ فَرِيْقٌ مِّنْهُمْ ۭ بَلْ اَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ١٠٠

(2-100) Is it not that every time they made a covenant with Allah a party of them set it aside? The truth is that most of them do not truly believe.

وَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ رَسُوْلٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ نَبَذَ فَرِيْقٌ مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ كِتٰبَ اللّٰهِ وَرَاۗءَ ظُهُوْرِهِمْ كَاَنَّهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ١٠١

(2-101) And whenever a Messenger from Allah came to them, confirming what they already possessed, a party of those who had been given the Scripture flung the Book of Allah behind their backs as if they knew nothing,

وَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ رَسُوْلٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ نَبَذَ فَرِيْقٌ مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ كِتٰبَ اللّٰهِ وَرَاۗءَ ظُهُوْرِهِمْ كَاَنَّهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ١٠١

(2-102) and then followed what the evil ones falsely attributed to the Kingdom of Solomon [104] even though Solomon had never disbelieved; it is the evil ones who disbelieved, teaching people magic. And they followed what had been revealed to the two angels in Babylon – Harut and Marut – although these two (angels) never taught it to anyone without

first declaring: “We are merely a means of testing people; so, do not engage in unbelief.” (105) And yet they learned from them what might cause division between a man and his wife. (106) They could not cause harm to anyone except by the leave of Allah, and still they learned what harmed rather than profited them, knowing well that he who bought it will have no share in the World to Come. Evil indeed is what they sold themselves for. Had they but known!

(104) 'Evil ones' embraces all evil beings, whether they belong to the human species or to the jinn. Here the reference seems to be to both.

When moral and material decline set in among the Israelites, they were overwhelmed with slavery and ignorance, with misery and poverty, and with humiliation and decadence. They were thus drained of all high ambitions and increasingly turned to magic, sorcery, witchcraft, charms and amulets. They began to search for facile means such as spells that would spare them hard work and yet ensure the achievement of their desired ends. At this stage they were misled by the evil ones, who made them believe that the mighty kingdom and astonishing power of Solomon were merely due to occult sciences and magical formulae, and that by revealing those they would pass on to them the keys to success. People were so engrossed in such practices that they ignored both the Book of God and anyone who summoned them to truth and righteousness.

(105) There are various opinions on the interpretation of this verse. My own conclusion is that at the time when the whole Israelite nation was chained in slavery and captivity in Babylonia God sent two angels in human form in order to test the Jews. In the same way as angels were sent to the people of Lot in the form of handsome youths see (Quran 11: 69 ff. - Ed.), they were presumably sent to Israel in the form of divines who could work magic and sorcery. These angels at once began working their magical wonders but they warned the people that their presence among them was designed to test their faith, and that they ought not to jeopardize their After-life by the practice of magic. Despite the

warning it seems that the Israelites had become so fond of their magical artifices that they continued to resort to talismans and sorcery.

It should not surprise anyone that angels came down to earth in human form; angels are dutiful servants of God's kingdom, and are capable of assuming the form appropriate to the specific task they are required to perform at any particular time. Who knows how many angels may be busy performing their duties in our midst even today!

One might also wonder why angels should teach people magic, which is after all intrinsically evil. In order to understand this we must remember that the nature of their task was no different from that of an undercover policeman who hands over marked currency notes to a corrupt official as a bribe with the aim of ensuring that he is caught red-handed.

(106) This shows that the greatest demand was for magical arts and charms to sow discord between a man and his wife and to procure the eventual seduction of the latter. This was the depth of moral depravity to which these people had fallen. A people cannot sink to a lower level of moral degeneracy than when adulterous affairs become their favorite pastime, and when seducing a married woman is considered a boastful achievement. The matrimonial relationship is, in truth, the very foundation of man's collective life. The soundness of human civilization depends on the soundness of the relationship between the two sexes. Hence, nothing could be worse than the person who strikes at the very foundations of the structure which supports both him and society as a whole.

There is a Tradition from the Prophet to the effect that Satan sends his agents on their missions to all parts of the world. On their return these agents report their achievements with each mentioning his own special evil act. But Satan is not completely satisfied with any of them. It is only when an agent reports that he has succeeded in separating a wife from her husband that Satan is filled with joy and embraces him. (Bukhari, 'Talaq', 25 - Ed.) In the light of this Tradition it is understandable why the angels who

were sent to the Israelites to test them were asked to disclose those magical arts which would lead to separation between a husband and his wife, for the inclination of a people to learn such arts is a sure index of its moral decadence.

وَلَوْ اَنَّ ۙهُمْ اٰمَنُوْا وَاتَّقَوْا لَمَثُوْبَةٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ خَيْرٌ ۘ لَوْ كَانُوْا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝١٠٣

(2-103) Had they believed and been God-fearing Allah's reward would have been better! Had they but known!

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَقُوْلُوْا رَاعِنَا وَقُوْلُوا انْظُرْنَا وَاسْمَعُوْا ۭ وَلِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ۝١٠٤

(2-104) O you who believe! [107] Do not say (to the Prophet): Ra'ina (Lend ear to us), but say Unzurna (Favour us with your attention) and pay heed (to him).[108] A painful chastisement awaits the unbelievers.

(107) This and the following verses inform the followers of the Prophet (peace be on him) of the machinations of the Jews against Islam and the Muslims, and dispel any doubts and misgivings they tried to create in their minds. Special attention is paid to the points raised during controversial discussions between Muslims and Jews. It is useful to note here that when the Prophet (peace be on him) arrived in Madinah and the message of Islam began to spread the Jews tried to engage Muslims in controversial religious discussions. They raised all kinds of involved and suspicion-provoking problems so as to contaminate the simple and pure-hearted Muslims with the spiritual diseases from which they themselves suffered. Not only that, they resorted to sly and deceptive talk in the presence of the Prophet.

(108) When the Jews visited the Prophet they tried to vent their spite by using ambiguous expressions in their greetings and conversation. They, used words which had double meanings, one innocent and the other offensive. After using quite proper expressions they would then whisper some malicious words. Ostensibly they maintained the decorum of respect and courtesy while sparing no underhand means to insult the Prophet. Later we shall encounter several examples of this kind of behavior. The particular expression referred to here, and which the Muslims

were asked to avoid using since it lent itself to abuse, was employed by the Jews when in conversation with the Prophet, whenever they wanted to request a short pause in which to finish whatever they wanted to say. They, used the expression ra'ina, which meant 'kindly indulge us' or ' kindly lend ear to us'.

It was possible, however, for the expression to be used with quite a different shade of meaning. In Hebrew, for instance, there is a word similar to it which means: 'Listen, may you become deaf.' In the same language it also means arrogant, ignorant and fool. In actual conversation it was also used on occasions when one wanted to say: 'If you listen to me, 1 will listen to you.' When it was pronounced with a slight twist of the tongue it turned into ra'ina, meaning 'our shepherd'.

It is because of the possibility of the word being used in these different senses that Muslims were asked to avoid it and to use instead the straightforward expression unzurna, meaning 'kindly favour us with your attention' or 'kindly grant us a while to follow (what you are saying)'. This advice was followed by the admonition to listen attentively to what the Prophet said, for the Jews used to ask for the same thing to be repeated merely because they did not pay proper attention to what the Prophet said but instead were engrossed in their own thoughts. If the Muslims were to heed what the Prophet said, they would scarcely need to make such requests.

مَا يَوَدُّ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا مِنۡ اَهۡلِ الۡكِتٰبِ وَلَا الۡمُشۡرِكِيۡنَ اَنۡ يُّنَزَّلَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ مِّنۡ خَيۡرٍ مِّنۡ رَّبِّكُمۡ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَخۡتَصُّ بِرَحۡمَتِهٖ مَنۡ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ ذُو الۡفَضۡلِ الۡعَظِيۡمِ ﴿۱۰۵﴾

(2-105) The unbelievers, be they the People of the Book or those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity, do not wish that any good should be sent down upon you from your Lord. But Allah chooses for His mercy whomsoever He wills. Allah is Lord of Abounding Bounty.

مَا نَنۡسَخۡ مِنۡ اٰيَةٍ اَوۡ نُنۡسِهَا نَاۡتِ بِخَيۡرٍ مِّنۡهَاۤ اَوۡ مِثۡلِهَا ؕ اَلَمۡ تَعۡلَمۡ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ قَدِيۡرٌ ﴿۱۰۶﴾

(2-106) For whatever verse We might abrogate or consign to oblivion, We bring a better one or the like of it. [109] Are you not aware that Allah is All-Powerful?

(109) This is in response to a doubt which the Jews tried to implant in the minds of the Muslims. If both the earlier Scriptures and the Quran were revelations from God, why was it – they asked – that the injunctions found in the earlier Scriptures had been replaced by new ones in the Quran? How could the same God issue divergent injunctions? Furthermore, they expressed their amazement at the Quranic indictment of the Jews and Christians for having allowed part of the revelation to be forgotten and lost, pointing out that it was impossible that Divine revelation should be erased from human memory. In all this, their motive was not to know the truth but to cast doubt on the Divine origin of the Quran. In refutation God states that He being the Absolute Sovereign has unlimited authority both to abrogate previous injunctions and to cause people to forget the injunctions He wants them to forget. However, God ensures that whatever He abrogates or causes to be erased from people's memories is replaced by something equally or even more beneficial.

اَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَهٗ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مِنْ وَّلِيٍّ وَّلَا نَصِيْرٍ ﴿١٠٧﴾

(2-107) Are you not aware that the dominion of the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah, and that none apart from Allah is your protector or helper?

اَمْ تُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ تَسْـَٔلُوْا رَسُوْلَكُمْ كَمَا سُئِلَ مُوْسٰى مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمَنْ يَّتَبَدَّلِ الْكُفْرَ بِالْاِيْمَانِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَآءَ السَّبِيْلِ ﴿١٠٨﴾

(2-108) Or would you ask your Messenger in the manner Moses [110] was asked before? And whoever exchanges faith for unbelief has surely strayed from the Right Way.

(110) The Jews, who were addicted to hair-splitting arguments, instigated the Muslims to ask the Prophet a great many questions.

God, therefore, cautioned the Muslims against following the example of the Jews in this matter, and admonished them against unnecessary inquisitiveness. The Prophet himself often warned the Muslims that excessive inquisitiveness (which was devoid of religious earnestness and the sincere desire to do God's will) had been the ruin of earlier religious communities. (Muslim, 'Fadail', 130; Bukhari, '1'tisim', 2 - Ed.) He stressed that people need not delve too deeply into questions left unelucidated by God or His Messenger. It was better to follow the injunctions which were clearly laid down, abstain from things prohibited, and avoid excessive inquiry about far-fetched, hypothetical issues, attending instead to questions of practical significance.

وَدَّ كَثِيۡرٌ مِّنۡ اَہۡلِ الۡكِتٰبِ لَوۡ يَرُدُّوۡنَكُمۡ مِّنۡۢ بَعۡدِ اِيۡمَانِكُمۡ كُفَّارًا حَسَدًا مِّنۡ عِنۡدِ اَنۡفُسِہِمۡ مِّنۡۢ بَعۡدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَہُمُ الۡحَـقُّ‌ فَاعۡفُوۡا وَاصۡفَحُوۡا حَتّٰى يَاۡتِىَ اللّٰهُ بِاَمۡرِهٖ‌ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ قَدِيۡرٌ ۱۰۹

(2-109) Out of sheer envy many People of the Book would be glad to turn you back into unbelievers after you have become believers even though the Truth has become clear to them. Nevertheless, forgive and be indulgent (111) towards them until Allah brings forth His decision. Surely Allah is All-Powerful.

(111) This means that one should neither allow oneself to get angry at their spite and hostility, nor waste one's valuable time by engaging in useless debates and acrimonious polemics. It is better to wait patiently and observe how God deals with them. Instead of wasting energy in frivolous pursuits such as those mentioned above one should spend it in the remembrance of God and in acts of goodness, for it is these rather than barren controversies that will benefit man in the Life to Come.

وَاَقِيۡمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ‌ وَمَا تُقَدِّمُوۡا لِاَنۡفُسِكُمۡ مِّنۡ خَيۡرٍ تَجِدُوۡهُ عِنۡدَ اللّٰهِ‌ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ بَصِيۡرٌ ۱۱۰

(2-110) Establish Prayer and dispense Zakah. Whatever good deeds you send forth for your own good, you will find them with Allah. Surely Allah sees all that you do.

وَقَالُوْا لَنْ يَّدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ اِلَّا مَنْ كَانَ هُوْدًا اَوْ نَصٰرٰى تِلْكَ اَمَانِيُّهُمْ قُلْ هَاتُوْا بُرْهَانَكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ١١١

(2-111) They say: “None shall enter the Garden unless he be a Jew or (according to the Christians), a Christian.” These are their vain desires.(112) Say: “Bring your proof if you are speaking the truth.”

(112) That is, all this is merely wishful thinking, even though they express thoughts as if they were really going to happen.

بَلٰى ۞ مَنْ اَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهٗ لِلّٰهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَلَهٗۤ اَجْرُهٗ عِنْدَ رَبِّهٖ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ ١١٢

(2-112) (None has any special claim upon reward from Allah.) Whoever submits himself completely to the obedience of Allah and does good will find his reward with his Lord. No fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve.

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُوْدُ لَيْسَتِ النَّصٰرٰى عَلٰى شَيْءٍ وَّقَالَتِ النَّصٰرٰى لَيْسَتِ الْيَهُوْدُ عَلٰى شَيْءٍ وَّهُمْ يَتْلُوْنَ الْكِتٰبَ كَذٰلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ فَاللّٰهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ فِيْمَا كَانُوْا فِيْهِ يَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ١١٣

(2-113) The Jews say: “The Christians have no basis for their beliefs,” and the Christians say: “The Jews have no basis for their beliefs.” They say so even though they read the Scripture. The claim of those who have no knowledge (of the Scripture) is similar. (113) Allah will judge between them concerning their differences on the Day of Resurrection.

(113) The reference is to the polytheists of Arabia.

وَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ مَّنَعَ مَسٰجِدَ اللّٰهِ اَنْ يُّذْكَرَ فِيْهَا اسْمُهٗ وَسَعٰى فِيْ خَرَابِهَا ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ مَا كَانَ لَهُمْ اَنْ يَّدْخُلُوْهَا اِلَّا خَآئِفِيْنَ ؕ لَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ وَّلَهُمْ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ ١١٤

(2-114) Who is more iniquitous than he who bars Allah’s places of worship, that His name be mentioned there, and seeks their destruction? It does not behoove such people to enter them, and should they enter, they should enter in fear. (114) There is degradation for them in this world and a mighty chastisement in the Next.

(114) Places of worship should properly remain in the custody of devout and God-fearing people, so that even if bad people did go there they would be deterred from committing misdeeds through fear of punishment. This is a subtle reference to the wrong perpetrated by the unbelievers of Makka, who had barred their own compatriots - the Muslims - from worshipping in the House of God.

وَ لِلِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ ۚ فَاَيۡنَمَا تُوَلُّوۡا فَثَمَّ وَجۡهُ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيۡمٌ ﴿۱۱۵﴾

(2-115) The East and the West belong to Allah. To whichever direction you turn, you will be turning to Allah. (115) Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing. (116)

(115) God is neither eastern nor western. East and west, north and south, and indeed all places and directions are His, though He is not confined to any particular place or direction. Hence, if any place or direction is fixed for worship this does not mean that God dwells there. Likewise, changes in the direction of Prayer is not a proper subject for controversy and dispute.

(116) That is, God is neither limited, mean, narrow-minded, nor poor in resources. All such notions about God, which arise from considering Him as essentially similar to human beings, are erroneous. God's realm is boundless and so is His vision and the range of His benevolence and mercy. Moreover, God's knowledge

is all-embracing. He knows who remembers Him, as well as where, when and why he does that.

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللّٰهُ وَلَدًا سُبْحٰنَهٗ ؕ بَلْ لَّهٗ مَا فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ كُلٌّ لَّهٗ قٰنِتُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۶﴾

(2-116) They say: “Allah has taken to Himself a son.” Glory to Him! Nay, whatever is in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him; to Him are all in obeisance.

بَدِیْعُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ وَاِذَا قَضٰۤی اَمْرًا فَاِنَّمَا یَقُوْلُ لَهٗ كُنْ فَیَكُوْنُ ﴿۱۱۷﴾

(2-117) He is the Originator of the heavens and the earth; whenever He decrees a matter He (merely) says: “Be”, and it is.

وَقَالَ الَّذِیْنَ لَا یَعْلَمُوْنَ لَوْلَا یُكَلِّمُنَا اللّٰهُ اَوْ تَاْتِیْنَاۤ اٰیَةٌ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِیْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِّثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ ؕ تَشٰبَهَتْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ ؕ قَدْ بَیَّنَّا الْاٰیٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ یُّوْقِنُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۸﴾

(2-118) The ignorant say: “Why does Allah not speak to us? (117) Why does no Sign come to us?” The same was said by people before them. Their hearts are all alike. (118) We have made the Signs clear for people of firm faith. (119)

(117) What they meant was that God should either appear before them Himself, tell them plainly that the Quran was a revelation from Him, and proclaim His injunctions, or cause them to see some extraordinary sign that would convince them that whatever Muhammad (peace be on him) told them was from Him.

(118) The fact is that the misguided people of the time of the revelation of the Quran did not raise any objection or make any demands essentially different from those of the misguided people of the past. From the remote past till today, error and

misguidedness seem to have the same character, so the same doubts and objections are repeated over and over again.

(119) The demand that God should speak to them directly was too absurd even to be answered. The question dealt with here concerns the demand for a sign that would convince them of the Truth. In response to this it is pointed out that many signs do exist, but all such signs are of profit only to those who are inclined to believe. As for those who are bent on disbelief, what sign can be shown to them, and to what avail?

اِنَّاۤ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيْرًا وَّنَذِيْرًا ۙ وَّلَا تُسْـَٔلُ عَنْ اَصْحٰبِ الْجَحِيْمِ ١١٩

(2-119) (What greater Sign can there be than that) We sent you with the Truth as a bearer of good tidings and a warner! (120) And you will not be answerable about the people of the Blazing Flame!

(120) Why speak of other signs when the most conspicuous sign of Truth is the very person of Muhammad? Let us recall his life before the commencement of his prophethood, the conditions existing in the area where, and the people among whom, he was born, the manner in which he was brought up and spent the first forty years of his life, and then his glorious achievements as a Prophet. What further signs could we want in support of his message?

وَلَنْ تَرْضٰى عَنْكَ الْيَهُوْدُ وَلَا النَّصٰرٰى حَتّٰى تَتَّبِعَ مِلَّتَهُمْ ۗ قُلْ اِنَّ هُدَى اللّٰهِ هُوَ الْهُدٰى ۗ وَلَىِٕنِ اتَّبَعْتَ اَهْوَآءَهُمْ بَعْدَ الَّذِيْ جَآءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ ۙ مَا لَكَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ وَّلِيٍّ وَّلَا نَصِيْرٍ ١٢٠

(2-120) Never will the Jews be pleased with you, (O Prophet), nor the Christians until you follow their way. (121) Say: “Surely Allah’s guidance, is the true guidance.” Should you follow their desires disregarding the knowledge which has come to you, you shall have no protector or helper against Allah.

(121) The cause of their disconcertment with the Prophet (peace be on him) was not that they were earnest seekers after the Truth which the Prophet had failed to make clear to them. The real cause of their unhappiness was that he had not resorted to hypocrisy and trickery, in regard to religious matters, that unlike them he did not pursue self-interest and self-indulgence under the facade of godliness and piety, that he did not twist religious principles and injunctions without scruple, as the Jews were wont to do in order to make them suit their desires and fancies, that he did not resort to the chicanery and duplicity which characterized the religious life of the Jews. As a result, it was no use trying to appease them. For unless the Muslims were prepared to assume the attitude and orientation of the Jews and to follow all their errors in belief and practice, there was no question of their being able to bring about any reconciliation with them.

اَلَّذِیۡنَ اٰتَیۡنٰہُمُ الۡکِتٰبَ یَتۡلُوۡنَہٗ حَقَّ تِلَاوَتِہٖ ؕ اُولٰٓئِکَ یُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ بِہٖ ؕ وَ مَنۡ یَّکۡفُرۡ بِہٖ فَاُولٰٓئِکَ ہُمُ الۡخٰسِرُوۡنَ ﴿۱۲۱﴾

(2-121) Those to whom We have given the Scripture, and who recite it as it ought to be recited, they truly believe in it; (122) and those who disbelieve in it, they are the real losers.

(122) This refers to the pious element among the People of the Book. Since these people read the Book with sincerity and honesty of purpose, they are inclined to accept whatever they find to be true according to it.

یٰبَنِیۡۤ اِسۡرَآءِیۡلَ اذۡکُرُوۡا نِعۡمَتِیَ الَّتِیۡۤ اَنۡعَمۡتُ عَلَیۡکُمۡ وَ اَنِّیۡ فَضَّلۡتُکُمۡ عَلَی الۡعٰلَمِیۡنَ ﴿۱۲۲﴾

(2-122) Children of Israel! (123) Recall My favour which I bestowed upon you and I exalted you above the nations of the world,

(123) A fresh subject is now broached. In order to appreciate it fully, the following should be clearly borne in mind:

(1) After Noah, Abraham was the first Prophet appointed by God to spread the universal message of Islam. At the outset, he journeyed for many years from Iraq to Egypt, and from Syria and Palestine to various parts of Arabia inviting people to serve and obey God. Later he appointed deputies in various regions to carry on his mission. He sent his nephew Lot to Transjordan, his son Isaac to Syria and Palestine, and his eldest son Ishmael to Arabia. Then he built, in Makka, the shrine called the Ka'bah which subsequently, and under God's own command, was made the centre of the prophetic mission.

(2) Abraham's progeny descended in two main branches. One of these, the Children of Ishmael, lived in Arabia. The Quraysh and other Arabian tribes belonged to this branch of Abraham's line. Even those Arabian tribes which were not related to him by blood identified themselves with Abraham, since they had been influenced in varying degrees by his religious ideas. The other branch consisted of the Children of Isaac. In this branch there arose a great number of Prophets, for example Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Solomon, John, and Jesus. Since Jacob was called Israel, his offspring came to be known as the Children of Israel. Other peoples who accepted their faith as a result of preaching either lost their former identity and became assimilated with them, or remained separate from them ethnically but identified with them religiously. At the time when decadence flourished this branch of the Abrahamic family gave birth first to Judaism, and subsequently to Christianity.

(3) The true mission of Abraham was to invite people to obey God and to mold the entire system of individual and collective life according to Divine Guidance. He was himself obedient to God and followed the teaching received from Him, and constantly strove to spread it and make all human beings live in obedience to it. It was because of this that he was appointed the religious leader

and guide of the whole world. After his death, the task of guiding the world was entrusted to the branch which had issued from Isaac and Jacob, and which came to be known as the Children of Israel. It is in this branch that many Prophets were born. It was also this branch which was given the knowledge of the Straight Way, and was designated to lead all the nations of the world along that Way. It is of this favor that God again and again reminds these people.

In the time of Solomon this branch took Jerusalem as the centre of its mission. Jerusalem maintained its central position for all devotees of God and remained the qiblah (direction) in which all worshippers of God were required to turn in their Prayer.

(4) While addressing the Children of Israel in the last ten sections, God set forth the criminal record of the Jews, exposed their decadent state at the time of the revelation of the Quran, and made it clear to them that they had totally lacked gratitude to God for His favors and bounties. Not only had they ceased to guide the world, but had turned away from Truth and righteousness to such an extent that nearly all of them had lost the capacity to do good and to respond to Truth.

(5) It is also intimated that the religious leadership of all mankind is not an exclusive privilege of Abrahamic blood, but rather the fruit of Abraham's sincere obedience and service to God, to which he had wholly consecrated himself. Only those who follow the way of Abraham, and guide the world along that way, are therefore entitled to the position of guidance and leadership. And since the Jews had abandoned it and become incapable of carrying out the mission of Abraham they were being removed from that position.

(6) At the same time it is hinted that the non-Israelite peoples who identified themselves with Abraham through Moses and Jesus had also veered from the way of

Abraham. The same was true of the polytheists of Arabia, who felt proud of belonging to Abraham and Ishmael and based this pride on lineage alone. For, so far as their faith and conduct were concerned, they had not even the remotest tie with Abraham and Ishmael. They did not deserve, therefore, to be entrusted with the religious leadership of the world.

(7) It is also made clear that by God's will a Prophet, for whose advent Abraham and Ishmael had once prayed, was born in the other branch of the Abrahamic family, i.e. the Ishmaelites. The way propounded by this Prophet is exactly the same as that by Abraham, Isaac, Ishmael, Jacob and in fact all the Messengers. His followers also confirm the truth of all those designated in the past to serve as God's Messengers, and call mankind to the same message those Messengers preached earlier. Thus, leadership now naturally devolves on those who follow this Prophet.

(8) This proclamation of a transfer of leadership naturally called for the proclamation of a change in the direction of Prayer. As long as the Israelites held the reins of the world's religious leadership, Jerusalem remained the centre of the mission of Islam and the qiblah of truth-loving people. The Arabian Prophet (peace be on him) as well as his followers had accepted Jerusalem as the qiblah until God duly proclaimed the removal of the Jews from their position of leadership. With this proclamation Jerusalem ceased to enjoy its central position. So it was proclaimed that from then on the centre of God's true religion would be the place from which the message of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) had radiated. Since in the past it had been the centre of the mission of Abraham (peace be on him), it was difficult even for the polytheists and for the People of the Book to deny that the Kabah had a greater right to be made the qiblah. There was thus every reasonable ground for the decision to

change the qiblah and its opponents could only object out of irrational adamance.

(9) The proclamation that the followers of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) had been designated to the religious leadership of mankind, and that the Kabah would now be the focal point of man's religious life, was followed by directives (beginning with(Verse 153)and continuing to the end of the surah) addressed to the Muslims. These directives were aimed at enabling the Muslims to acquit themselves creditably of the duties laid upon their shoulders as the bearers of this mission.

وَاتَّقُوۡا يَوۡمًا لَّا تَجۡزِىۡ نَفۡسٌ عَنۡ نَّفۡسٍ شَيۡـًٔا وَّلَا يُقۡبَلُ مِنۡهَا عَدۡلٌ وَّلَا تَنۡفَعُهَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَّلَا هُمۡ يُنۡصَرُوۡنَ ١٢٣

(2-123) and beware of the Day when no one shall avail another, when ransom shall be accepted from no one, when no one's intercession will profit anyone, when there shall be no help from any quarter.

وَاِذِ ابۡتَلٰٓى اِبۡرٰهٖمَ رَبُّهٗ بِكَلِمٰتٍ فَاَتَمَّهُنَّ‌ؕ قَالَ اِنِّىۡ جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ اِمَامًا‌ؕ قَالَ وَمِنۡ ذُرِّيَّتِىۡ‌ؕ قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ عَهۡدِى الظّٰلِمِيۡنَ ١٢٤

(2-124) Recall when Abraham's Lord tested him in certain matters (124) and when he successfully stood the test, He said: "Indeed I am going to appoint you a leader of all people." When Abraham asked: "And is this covenant also for my descendants?" the Lord responded: "My covenant does not embrace the wrong-doers." (125)

(124) At various places the Quran enumerates the severe tests through which Abraham passed. It was only after these had been completed successfully that he was able to establish his worthiness to serve as the religious guide and leader of all mankind. From the moment when the truth was revealed to him

till the moment he died, his life was a continuous tale of sacrifice and suffering for his cause. There is no conceivable object of man's love and attachment in the world which Abraham did not sacrifice for the sake of the truth. Likewise, there is no conceivable danger which instinctively frightens man which Abraham did not encounter for the sake of the Truth.

(125) This specifies that God's promise of the conferment of leadership applied only to those of Abraham's offspring who were righteous, and that the wrong-doers were naturally excluded. This also makes it clear that, just as the promise did not apply to the misguided Israelites, it did not apply to the polytheistic Ishmaelites.

وَ اِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَاَمْنًا ؕ وَ اتَّخِذُوْا مِنْ مَّقَامِ اِبْرٰهٖمَ مُصَلًّى ؕ وَعَهِدْنَاۤ اِلٰۤى اِبْرٰهٖمَ وَ اِسْمٰعِيْلَ اَنْ طَهِّرَا بَيْتِىَ لِلطَّآئِفِيْنَ وَالْعٰكِفِيْنَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُوْدِ ﴿١٢٥﴾

(2-125) And We made this House (Ka'bah) a resort for mankind and a place of security, commanding people: “Take the station of Abraham as a permanent place for Prayer,” and enjoined Abraham and Ishmael: “Purify My House for those who walk around it, and those who abide in devotion, and those who bow, and who prostrate themselves (in Prayer).” (126)

(126) 'Purify My House' does not merely mean keeping it clean of dirt and filth. The real purity and cleanliness of the House of God rests in the fact that in it the name of God alone should be glorified. If someone declares in its sacred precincts that anything other than God is his Lord, his object of worship and adoration, the dispenser of man's needs and requirements, the hearer of man's supplications, then such a person is guilty of desecrating the House of God.

This verse also contains a hint as to the evil-doing of the people of the Quraysh. They boasted that they were the inheritors

of the legacy of Abraham and Ishmael, but instead of being faithful to that legacy, they actually trampled over it. So, just as the Children of Israel were excluded from the promise made to Abraham, so were the polytheistic children of Ishmael. (See also n. 125 above - Ed.)

وَ اِذْ قَالَ اِبْرٰهٖمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هٰذَا بَلَدًا اٰمِنًا وَّارْزُقْ اَهْلَهٗ مِنَ الثَّمَرٰتِ مَنْ اٰمَنَ مِنْهُمْ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ قَالَ وَ مَنْ كَفَرَ فَاُمَتِّعُهٗ قَلِيْلًا ثُمَّ اَضْطَرُّهٗۤ اِلٰى عَذَابِ النَّارِ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿۱۲۶﴾

(2-126) And when Abraham prayed: “O my Lord! Make this a place of security and provide those of its people that believe in Allah and the Last Day with fruits for sustenance,” Allah answered, “And I shall still provide him who disbelieves with the wherewithal for this short life, (127) and then I shall drive him to the chastisement of the Fire; that is an evil end.”

(127) (Here a distinction is made between honoring a people by entrusting it with the religious leadership and guidance of the world, and bestowing on it an abundant means of livelihood - Ed.) When Abraham enquired who merited world leadership it was made clear to him that only his truly believing and righteous children, to the exclusion of the wrong-doing ones, were worthy of it. This occasioned God to clarify that the religious leadership of the world was quite distinct from its livelihood. Men of faith alone were entitled to the former, whereas both believers and unbelievers would be provided the latter. If someone enjoys abundant material wealth it should not be misconstrued to mean that God is necessarily pleased with him and that he has been designated by God to provide religious guidance to the world.

وَ اِذْ يَرْفَعُ اِبْرٰهٖمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَ اِسْمٰعِيْلُ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿۱۲۷﴾

(2-127) Recall when Abraham and Ishmael raised the foundations of the House, praying: “Our Lord! Accept this from us; You are All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمَيْنِ لَكَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِنَا اُمَّةً مُّسْلِمَةً لَّكَ وَاَرِنَا مَنَاسِكَنَا وَتُبْ عَلَيْنَا اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيْمُ ١٢٨

(2-128) Our Lord! Make us submissive to You and make out of our descendants a community that submits itself to You, and show us the ways of Your worship, and turn to us in mercy. You are Much-Relenting, Most Compassionate.

رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيْهِمْ رَسُوْلًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُزَكِّيْهِمْ اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ١٢٩

(2-129) Our Lord! Raise up in the midst of our offspring a Messenger from among them who shall recite to them Your verses, and instruct them in the Book and in Wisdom, and purify their lives. [128] Verily, You are the Most Mighty, the Most Wise.” [129]

(128) The term 'purification' used here embraces the purification of beliefs and outlook, morals, habits and customs, and social, cultural and political life; the purification of man's life in its totality.

(129) This has been said in order to indicate that the advent of Muhammad (peace be on him) was in fact God's response to the prayer of Abraham (peace be on him).

وَمَنْ يَّرْغَبُ عَنْ مِّلَّةِ اِبْرٰهٖمَ اِلَّا مَنْ سَفِهَ نَفْسَهٗ وَلَقَدِ اصْطَفَيْنٰهُ فِى الدُّنْيَا وَاِنَّهٗ فِى الْاٰخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ١٣٠

(2-130) And who but a fool would be averse to the way of Abraham? For it is We Who chose Abraham for Our mission in this world, and surely in the World to Come he shall be reckoned among the righteous.

اِذْ قَالَ لَهٗ رَبُّهٗۤ اَسْلِمْ ۙ قَالَ اَسْلَمْتُ لِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿۱۳۱﴾

(2-131) Such was Abraham that when his Lord said to him: “Submit,” (130) he said: “I have submitted to the Lord of the Universe.”

(130) 'Muslim' signifies he who bows in obedience to God, who acknowledges God alone as his Sovereign, Lord and Master, and the only object of worship, devotion and service, who unreservedly surrenders himself to God and undertakes to live his life in accordance with the guidance that has come down from Him. Islam is the appellation which characterizes the above - mentioned belief and outlook which constitutes the core and kernel of the religion of all the Prophets who have appeared from time to time among different peoples and in different countries since the very beginning of human life.

وَوَصّٰى بِهَاۤ اِبْرٰهٖمُ بَنِيْهِ وَيَعْقُوْبُ ؕ يٰبَنِيَّ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ اصْطَفٰى لَكُمُ الدِّيْنَ فَلَا تَمُوْتُنَّ اِلَّا وَاَنْتُمْ مُّسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿۱۳۲﴾

(2-132) And Abraham enjoined the same upon his children, and so did Jacob: (131) “My children! Behold, Allah has chosen this religion for you. (132) Remain till death in submission (to Allah).” (133)

(131) Jacob is especially mentioned since the Children of Israel were his direct descendants.

(132) Din is a Quranic technical term, signifying the way of life, the system of conduct, and the code on which man bases

his entire mode of thought and action. (For the author's views on din see his Four Basic Quranic Terms, tr. Abu Asad, Lahore, 1979, pp. 93-103 - Ed.)

(133) In the Bible the events connected with the death of Jacob (peace be on him) are narrated in detail. It is amazing that this narrative makes no reference to his testament. However, the contents of the detailed testament embodied in the Talmud greatly resemble the Quranic version. The Talmudic version reads as follows:

'Serve the Lord your God, and He will deliver ye from all trouble, even as He delivered your fathers.'
' . . . Teach your children to love God, and observe His commandments, in order that their days may be prolonged, for God will guard those who do justly and walk in righteousness through all His ways.'
And the sons of Jacob responded, 'All that you have commanded us, our father, we will do. May God be with us!'

And Jacob answered: 'The Lord will be with you if ye depart not from His ways to the right hand or to the left.'

(The Talmud Selections by H. Polano, London, Frederick Warne & Co., [1877], pp. 113-14.)

اَمْ كُنْتُمْ شُهَدَآءَ اِذْ حَضَرَ يَعْقُوْبَ الْمَوْتُ اِذْ قَالَ لِبَنِيْهِ مَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِيْ ؕ قَالُوْا نَعْبُدُ اِلٰهَكَ وَ اِلٰهَ اٰبَآئِكَ اِبْرٰهٖمَ وَ اِسْمٰعِيْلَ وَ اِسْحٰقَ اِلٰهًا وَّاحِدًا ۚ وَّنَحْنُ لَهٗ مُسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿۱۳۳﴾

(2-133) Why, were you witnesses when death came to Jacob? He asked his children: “Whom will you serve after me?” They said: “We shall serve your God, the God of your forefathers, Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac, the One God, and unto Him do we submit.”

تِلْكَ اُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ ۚ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلَكُمْ مَّا كَسَبْتُمْ ۚ وَلَا تُسْـَٔلُوْنَ عَمَّا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۳۴﴾

(2-134) Now, they were a people who passed away. Theirs is what they have earned, and yours is what you have earned. You shall not be asked concerning what they did. (134)

(134) What is being said here is that even though they might be their offspring in terms of blood - relationship they had, in fact, no true relationship with them. What right did they have to pretend to belong to them when they had departed far from their way? For God would not ask people what their forefathers did; it was rather about their own conduct and action that they would be questioned.

' Theirs is what they have earned ' is a characteristically Quranic expression. What we ordinarily characterize as either 'action' or 'doing' is termed by the Quran as 'earning'. The reason is that each and every human action has its ultimate effect, whether or not it is good, and will have its manifestation in God's approval or disapproval. It is this ultimate effect which is a man's earning. Since the Quran considers this to be of paramount importance, it characterizes man's actions as his 'earning'.

وَقَالُوا كُونُوا هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَىٰ تَهْتَدُوا ۗ قُلْ بَلْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا ۖ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٣٥﴾

(2-135) They say: “Be Jews,” or “Be Christians.” “Then you will be rightly guided.” Say to them: “No, follow exclusively the way of Abraham who was not one of those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity.” (135)

(135) In order to grasp the subtlety, of this remark two things should be borne in mind. First, that in comparison to Islam, the primordial religion, both Judaism and Christianity are later products. The name Judaism, as well as the characteristic features and elaborate body of laws and regulations associated with it. emerged during the third or fourth century, B.C. As for

Christianity. in the sense of the body of dogmas and theological doctrines which characterize it, it came into existence long after Jesus (peace be on him). The question that naturally arises is that, if man's guidance depends on following Judaism or Christianity, how can Abraham and other Prophets and righteous people who are accepted as having been rightly-guided even by the Jews and Christians be considered so when they were born several centuries before the birth of Judaism and Christianity? If they were rightly-guided from whom did they receive their guidance? Obviously their source of guidance and inspiration was neither Judaism nor Christianity since, in their times, these did not exist. So man's rectitude does not depend on those characteristics which led to the rise of Jewish and Christian particularisms; it rather depends on adopting that universal way to Truth which has guided and inspired men throughout the ages.

Second. the Scriptures of the Jews and Christians attest that Abraham believed that worship, adoration, service and obedience were due to God alone, and that it was his mission to have none associated with God in His attributes and rights. Since polytheistic elements had made inroads into Judaism and Christianity it was obvious that both had strayed from the way of Abraham.

قُوْلُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْنَا وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلٰٓى اِبْرٰهٖمَ وَاِسْمٰعِيْلَ وَاِسْحٰقَ وَيَعْقُوْبَ وَالْاَسْبَاطِ وَمَآ اُوْتِيَ مُوْسٰى وَعِيْسٰى وَمَآ اُوْتِيَ النَّبِيُّوْنَ مِنْ رَّبِّهِمْ ۚ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ اَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ ۚ وَنَحْنُ لَهٗ مُسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿١٣٦﴾

(2-136) Say: “We believe in Allah, and in what has been revealed to us and to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and the descendants (of Jacob) and in what was given to Moses and Jesus and in what the other Prophets received from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, (136) and we are those who submit to Allah.”

(136) To make no distinction between the Prophets means not to hold some of them to be right and the others to be wrong, not to

recognize some to have been the recipients of Divine revelation and the others not. All the Prophets sent by God invited men to the same Truth and to the same way. Hence for anyone who is really a lover of Truth it is necessary that he should recognize all of them to be its bearers. Those who believe in one particular Prophet and disbelieve in others do not in fact believe even in that particular Prophet in whom they, claim to believe, for they have not grasped the nature of that universal 'Straight Way' (al-sirat al-mustaqim) which was enunciated by Moses, Jesus and the other Prophets. When such people claim to follow a Prophet they, really mean that they do so out of deference to their forefathers. Their religion in fact consists of bigoted ancestor-worship and blind imitation of inherited customs rather than sincere adherence to the directives of any Prophet of God.

فَاِنْ اٰمَنُوْا بِمِثْلِ مَآ اٰمَنْتُمْ بِهٖ فَقَدِ اهْتَدَوْا ۚ وَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاِنَّمَا هُمْ فِيْ شِقَاقٍ ۚ فَسَيَكْفِيْكَهُمُ اللّٰهُ ۚ وَهُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ١٣٧

(2-137) And then if they come to believe as you believe, they are on right guidance; and if they turn away, then quite obviously they have merely fallen into opposition to the Truth. Allah will suffice you for protection against them. He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

صِبْغَةَ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَمَنْ اَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ صِبْغَةً ۚ وَّنَحْنُ لَهٗ عٰبِدُوْنَ ١٣٨

(2-138) Say: “Take on Allah’s color.” (137) And whose color is better than Allah’s? It is Him that we serve.

(137) This verse can be translated in two ways. One of these is: 'We have taken on Allah's color.' The other is: 'Take on Allah's color.' On the eve of the advent of Christianity the Jews followed the practice of bathing everyone who embraced their religion. This ritual bath signified that all his previous sins had been washed away and that he had adopted a different color for his life. This practice was subsequently taken over by the Christians

and is termed 'baptism'. Not only converts but even new-born babies were baptized. The Quranic remarks here refer to this institution. The Quran says in effect: 'Of what use is this formal baptism? What really is worth doing is to adopt the color of God, and it is not water that gives one this color but actual service and devotion to God.'

قُلْ اَتُحَآجُّوْنَنَا فِى اللّٰهِ وَهُوَ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمْ وَلَنَآ اَعْمٰلُنَا وَلَكُمْ اَعْمٰلُكُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهٗ مُخْلِصُوْنَ ﴿١٣٩﴾

(2-139) Say (O Prophet): “Will you then dispute with us concerning Allah when He is our Lord and your Lord? (138) Our deeds are for us and your deeds are for you. And it is Him that we serve exclusively.” (139)

(138) The one principle that the Prophet and his followers unreservedly stood for was that God alone should be served. Does that call for dispute and quarrel? If anyone, it is the Muslims who are entitled to quarrel with the Jews and Christians, for it is they rather than the Muslims who insist that others beside God should also be made objects of service and adoration.

An alternative translation of this portion could be: 'Would you then dispute with us for the sake of Allah?' In this case the meaning of the verse would be that if their dispute was sincere, it was easy to put an end to it by, agreeing to serve none but God.

(139) They are told that everyone is responsible for his own conduct. If they have earmarked a part of their service and devotion to others than God, let them do so and see for themselves what it leads to. The Muslims did not want to keep them from error by force. As for themselves, they had consecrated their service, obedience and worship to God alone. If the Jews and Christians could bring themselves to recognize the right of the Muslims to do so, the dispute could automatically be brought to an end,

اَمْ تَقُوْلُوْنَ اِنَّ اِبْرٰهٖمَ وَ اِسْمٰعِيْلَ وَ اِسْحٰقَ وَيَعْقُوْبَ وَالْاَسْبَاطَ كَانُوْا هُوْدًا اَوْ نَصٰرٰى ؕ قُلْ ءَاَنْتُمْ اَعْلَمُ اَمِ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ كَتَمَ شَهَادَةً عِنْدَهٗ مِنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَمَا اللّٰهُ بِغٰفِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۴۰﴾

(2-140) Or do you claim that Abraham and Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob and the descendants (of Jacob) were “Jews” or “Christians?” Say: “Who has greater knowledge, you or Allah?” (140) Who does greater wrong than he who conceals a testimony he has received from Allah? Allah is not heedless of the things you do. (141)

(140) This remark is addressed to the ignorant mass of Jews and Christians who sincerely believed that all the Prophets belonged to their religious denomination.

(141) This remark is addressed to the Jewish and Christian theologians who were not unaware that Judaism and Christianity, with their existing characteristics, had emerged at a relatively late period in history. They nevertheless considered Truth to he confined to their own religious sects. They also perpetuated the misunderstanding that man's ultimate happiness and success lay in following the beliefs, institutions and legal codes which had been developed by their jurists, theologians and mystics long after the Prophet of God had passed away. When these theologians were asked to which among their religious communities Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and other Prophets belonged, they evaded a reply. This was because they could not state categorically that they belonged to their own sect. On the other hand, they could not reply explicitly in the negative, for such an admission would have undermined the very basis of their claim that Truth was confined to their fold.

تِلْكَ اُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ ۚ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلَكُمْ مَّا كَسَبْتُمْ ۚ وَلَا تُسْـَٔلُوْنَ عَمَّا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ١٤١ ؕ

(2-141) Now, they were a people who passed away. Theirs is what they earned, and yours is what you earn; you shall not be questioned concerning what they did.

سَيَقُوْلُ السُّفَهَآءُ مِنَ النَّاسِ مَا وَلّٰىهُمْ عَنْ قِبْلَتِهِمُ الَّتِيْ كَانُوْا عَلَيْهَا ۭ قُلْ لِّلّٰهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ ۭ يَهْدِيْ مَنْ يَّشَاۗءُ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ١٤٢

(2-142) The block-headed will say: “What has turned them away from the direction they formerly observed in Prayer?” (142) Say: “To Allah belong the East and the West; He guides whomsoever He wills onto a Straight Way.” (143)

(142) After his migration to Madinah the Prophet continued to pray in the direction of Jerusalem for between sixteen and seventeen months. Subsequently, he received the order to pray in the direction of the Kabah. See(Verse 144 below)

(143) This is the first answer to the objections of these ignorant people. Their narrow minds and limited vision led them to undue attachment to such formalities as the direction and locale of Prayer. They presumably conceived God to be confined to a particular direction. In reply to their absurd objection the first thing which was explained was that all directions belong to God. Fixing any particular direction for Prayer does not mean that God is confined to that direction. All those who have been favored with God's true guidance rise above such limitations of outlook so that it is easy for them to grasp the universal verities of religion. (See also (nn. 115 and 116 above.)

وَكَذٰلِكَ جَعَلْنٰكُمْ اُمَّةً وَّسَطًا لِّتَكُوْنُوْا شُهَدَاۗءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُوْنَ الرَّسُوْلُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيْدًا ۭ وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِيْ كُنْتَ عَلَيْهَآ اِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَنْ يَّتَّبِعُ الرَّسُوْلَ مِمَّنْ يَّنْقَلِبُ عَلٰي عَقِبَيْهِ ۭ وَاِنْ كَانَتْ لَكَبِيْرَةً اِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ هَدَى اللّٰهُ ۭ وَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيُضِيْعَ اِيْمَانَكُمْ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ١٤٣ ؕ

(2-143) And it is thus that We appointed you to be the community of the middle way so that you might be witnesses to all mankind and the Messenger might be a witness to you. (144)

We appointed the direction which you formerly observed so that We might distinguish those who follow the Messenger from those who turn on their heels. (145) For it was indeed burdensome except for those whom Allah guided. And Allah will never leave your faith to waste. Allah is full of gentleness and mercy to mankind.

(144) This constitutes the proclamation appointing the religious community (ummah) consisting of the followers of Muhammad to religious guidance and leadership of the world.

' And it is thus', which precedes this proclamation, contains two allusions. It alludes, in the first place, to that Divine Guidance which enabled the followers of Muhammad to know the Straight Way so that they could attain progress to the point of being proclaimed 'the community of the middle way' (or 'the mid-most community' or 'the community justly balanced' - Ed.) In the second place there is an allusion to the change in the direction of Prayer from Jerusalem to the Kabah. People of limited intelligence could see no significance in this change of direction although the substitution of Jerusalem by the Ka'bah amounted to the removal of the Children of Israel from their position of world leadership and their replacement by the ummah of Muhammad (peace be on him).

The Arabic expression which we have translated as 'the community of the middle way' is too rich in meaning to find an adequate equivalent in any other language. It signifies that distinguished group of people which follows the path of justice and equity, of balance and moderation, a group which occupies a central position among the nations of the world so that its friendship with all is based on righteousness and justice and none receives its support in wrong and injustice.

The purpose of creating 'the community of the middle way', according to this Quranic verse, is to make it stand as witness 'before all mankind and the Messenger might be a witness before you'. What this means is that when the whole of mankind is called to account, the Prophet, as God's representative, will stand witness to the fact that he had communicated to the Muslims and had put into practice the teachings postulating sound beliefs, righteous conduct and a balanced system of life which he had received from on high. The Muslims, acting on behalf of the Prophet after his return to the mercy of God, will he asked to bear the same witness before the rest of mankind and to say that they had spared no effort in either communicating to mankind what the Prophet had communicated to them, or in exemplifying in their own lives what the Prophet had, by his own conduct, translated into actual practice.

This position of standing witness before all mankind on behalf of God, which has been conferred on this community, amounts to its being invested with the leadership of all mankind. This is at once a great honor and a heavy responsibility. For what it actually means is that just as the Prophet served as a living example of godliness and moral rectitude, of equity and fair play before the Muslim community, so is the Muslim community required to stand vis-à-vis the whole world. What is expected of this community is that it should be able to make known, both by word and deed, the meaning of godliness and righteousness, of equity and fair play.

Furthermore. just as the Prophet had been entrusted with the heavy responsibility of conveying to the Muslims the guidance which he had received. in a like manner a heavy responsibility has been laid on the Muslims to communicate this guidance to all mankind. If the Muslims fail to establish before God that they did their duty in conveying to mankind the guidance they had received through the Prophet they will be taken to task seriously and their honorable position as the leaders of the whole world, far from being of any help to them, will spell their disaster. They will be held responsible along with the protagonists of evil for all the errors of belief and conduct which have spread during their term

of leadership. They will have to face the grim question: What were they doing when the world was convulsed by storms of transgression, injustice and error?

(145) One purpose of this change in the direction of Prayer was to find out who was blinkered by irrational prejudices and chained by chauvinistic attachment to land and blood, and who, having liberated himself from those bonds, was capable of rising to the heights and grasping the Truth.

On the one hand were the Arabs who were steeped in their national and racial arrogance. For them, taking Jerusalem as the direction of their Prayer (as originally practiced by the Prophet) was too hard a blow to their national vanity to be accepted with equanimity. On the other hand, the Jews were essentially no different. They, too, were obsessed with racial pride so that it was difficult for them to accept any other than the direction of Prayer which they had inherited from the past. How could the people whose hearts were full of such idols respond to the call of the Messenger of God? Hence, God saw to it that the worshippers of such idols were distinguished from the genuine worshippers of God by first fixing Jerusalem as the direction of Prayer. This was bound to alienate all those who had worshipped the idol of Arabianism. Later, the fixing of the Kabah as the direction of Prayer led to the alienation of those who were engrossed in the worship of the idol of Israel. Thus there were left with the Prophet only, those who truly worshipped none but the One True God.

قَدْ نَرٰى تَقَلُّبَ وَجْهِكَ فِى السَّمَآءِ فَلَنُوَلِّيَنَّكَ قِبْلَةً تَرْضٰىهَا فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ؕ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوْا وُجُوْهَكُمْ شَطْرَهٗ ؕ وَ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ لَيَعْلَمُوْنَ اَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّهِمْ ؕ وَمَا اللّٰهُ بِغٰفِلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۴۴﴾

(2-144) We see you oft turning your face towards the sky; now We are turning you to the direction that will satisfy you. Turn your face towards the Holy Mosque, and wherever you are, turn your faces towards it in Prayer. (146)

Those who have been granted the Scripture certainly know that this (injunction to change the direction of Prayer) is right and is from their Lord. Allah is not heedless of what they do.

(146) This is the injunction concerning the change in the direction of Prayer and was revealed in Rajab or Sha'ban. 2 A.H. According to a Tradition in the Tabaqat of Ibn Sa'd, the Prophet was at the house of Bishr b. Barab. Marur where he had been invited to a meal. When the time of zuhr prayer came, the Prophet rose to lead it. He had completed two rakahs and was in the third when this verse was suddenly revealed. Soon after the revelation of this verse everybody, following the leadership of the Prophet, turned the direction of Prayer away from Jerusalem to the Kabah. A public proclamation of the new order was then made throughout Madinah and in the suburbs. Bara' b. 'Azib says that at one place the announcement was heard by people while they were in the state of ruku' (kneeling). On bearing this order they immediately turned their faces towards the Kabah. Anas b. Malik says that the news of the announcement reached Banu Salamah the next day while the morning Prayer was in progress. People had completed one rak'ah when they heard the announcement about the change of direction and the entire congregation immediately faced the new qiblah. (See Ibn Sa'd, Tabaqat, vol. 1, pp. 241 f. - Ed.)

It ought to be noted that Jerusalem is to the north of Madinah while the Kabah is to the south. In order to change direction during congregational Prayer it would have been necessary for the leader of the Prayer to walk several steps beyond what was originally the last row of worshippers. The people in the congregation, too, would have been forced not only to make a right about-turn but also to walk a little to straighten their rows. We find specific mention of this in certain Traditions.

The words, 'We see you oft turning your face to the heaven', and 'Now We are turning your face to the direction that shall satisfy you', show clearly that even before the revelation of this injunction the Prophet was expecting something of this

nature. He had begun to feel, with the termination of the era of Israelite leadership, that the time had come for the central position of Jerusalem to cease and a return to the original centre of the Abrahamic mission to commence.

The 'Holy Mosque' refers to the sanctuary invested with holiness and sanctity; the sanctuary in the centre of which the Kabah is located.

To turn one's face in the direction of the Kabah does not mean that wherever a man might be he should turn to the Kabah with absolute accuracy. It would obviously be extremely difficult for everyone to comply with such an order. Hence the order is to turn one's face in the direction of the Kabah rather than to the Kabah itself. According to the Quran, we are required to find out the direction of the Kabah as accurately as possible. We are not required, however, to locate it with absolute precision. We may pray in the direction which appears correct as a result of our enquiry. However, if a man is either at a place where it is difficult to determine the direction of the Kabah or if he is in a position where it is difficult to maintain the correct direction (e.g. when travelling on a train, a boat, or an aero plane), he may pray in the direction which seems correct, or in whatever direction it is possible for him to face. If he then comes to know the correct direction while he is in the state of Prayer he should turn his face in that direction.

وَلَئِنْ اَتَيْتَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ بِكُلِّ اٰيَةٍ مَّا تَبِعُوْا قِبْلَتَكَ ۚ وَمَآ اَنْتَ بِتَابِعٍ قِبْلَتَهُمْ ۚ وَمَا بَعْضُهُمْ بِتَابِعٍ قِبْلَةَ بَعْضٍ ۚ وَلَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتَ اَهْوَآءَهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ ۙ اِنَّكَ اِذًا لَّمِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿١٤٥﴾

(2-145) And yet no matter what proofs you bring before the People of the Book they will not follow your direction of Prayer; nor will you follow their direction of Prayer. None is prepared to follow the other’s direction of Prayer. Were you to

follow their desires in disregard of the knowledge which has come to you, you will surely be reckoned among the wrong-doers. (147)

(147) The purpose of this verse is to ask the Prophet not to be disturbed by the controversy and remonstrance to which some people had resorted as a result of this change in the direction of Prayer. It was difficult to convince those people by argument, since they suffered from prejudices and intransigence and were unwilling to abandon their traditional qiblah. It was also impossible for the matter to be resolved by adopting the qiblah of any of the contending groups; there were various groups and they were not agreed in respect of the qiblah. If the qiblah of one group had been adopted this would have satisfied only that group. As for the rest, their remonstrating would persist. Furthermore, and more basic in this connection, was the fact that as a Prophet Muhammad ought neither to be concerned to please people, nor haggle with them in order to arrive at compromised solutions. On the contrary, the mission of a Prophet is to adhere firmly, to the knowledge vouchsafed to him by God regardless of all opposition. To deviate from that knowledge to please others is tantamount to offending the prophetic mission and is inconsistent with the gratitude that the Prophet ought to feel for having been favored with the position of world leadership.

اَلَّذِيۡنَ اٰتَيۡنٰهُمُ الۡكِتٰبَ يَعۡرِفُوۡنَهٗ كَمَا يَعۡرِفُوۡنَ اَبۡنَآءَهُمۡ ؕ وَ اِنَّ فَرِيۡقًا مِّنۡهُمۡ لَيَكۡتُمُوۡنَ الۡحَـقَّ وَهُمۡ يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿۱۴۶﴾

(2-146) Those to whom We have given the Scripture recognize the place (towards which one must turn in Prayer) as fully as they recognize their own sons, (148) this even though a group of them knowingly conceals the Truth.

(148) 'To recognize something as well as one recognizes one's sons' is an Arabic idiom. It is used with regard to things which one knows without the least shadow of a doubt. The Jewish and Christian scholars were well aware that the Ka'bah had been constructed by Abraham and that Jerusalem had been built by Solomon some thirteen hundred years after that, and that in his

time it was made the qiblah. This is an unquestionable historical fact and they knew it to be so.

اَلْحَقُّ مِ نْ رَّبِّکَ فَلَا تَکُ نَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِیْنَ ۱۴۷

(2-147) This is a definite Truth from your Lord; be not, then, among the doubters.

وَ لِکُلٍّ وِّجْہَۃٌ ھُوَ مُوَلِّیْہَا فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَیْرٰتِ اَیْ نَ مَا تَکُوْنُوْا یَاْتِ بِکُمُ اللّٰہُ جَمِیْعًا اِنَّ اللّٰہَ عَلٰی کُلِّ شَیْءٍ قَدِیْرٌ ۱۴۸

(2-148) Everyone has a direction towards which he turns; so excel one another in good works. [149] Allah will bring you all together wherever you might be, for nothing is beyond His power.

(149) There is a subtle gap between this sentence and the next, a gap which the reader can fill with just a little reflection. The idea conveyed here is that anyone who prays will, after all, have to turn his face in some direction. But what is of real significance is not the turning of one's face in some specific direction but one's orientation to righteousness for the sake of which one performs the ritual Prayer. A man's real concern should be moral excellence rather than controversies regarding such formal regulations as the direction of Prayer.

وَمِنْ حَیْثُ خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْہَکَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَاِنَّہٗ لَلْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّکَ وَمَا اللّٰہُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ۱۴۹

(2-149) From wheresoever you might come forth turn your face towards the Holy Mosque; for that indeed is the Truth from your Lord, and Allah is not heedless of what you do.

وَمِنْ حَیْثُ خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْہَکَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَحَیْثُ مَا کُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوْا وُجُوْھَکُمْ شَطْرَہٗ لِئَلَّا یَکُوْنَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَیْکُمْ حُجَّۃٌ اِلَّا الَّذِیْنَ ظَلَمُوْا مِنْھُمْ فَلَا تَخْشَوْھُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِیْ وَلِاُتِمَّ نِعْمَتِیْ عَلَیْکُمْ وَلَعَلَّکُمْ تَہْتَدُوْنَ ۱۵۰

(2-150) From wheresoever you come forth turn your faces towards the Holy Mosque, and wheresoever you may be, turn your faces towards it in Prayer so that none may have an argument against you, [150] unless they be those immersed in wrong-doing. Do not fear them, but fear only Me so that I may complete My favour upon you; [151] perhaps you will be guided to the Right Way. [152]

(150) The followers of the Prophet (peace be upon him) were asked to follow the order to turn towards the Ka'bah, and to do so strictly, since any lapse in this matter on their part would give their opponents a weapon to use against them in their polemics. They would be able to hold Muslims up to ridicule on the grounds that they had violated what they themselves claimed to be from their Lord.

(151) The 'favour' here refers to the position of world leadership and guidance from which God removed the Children of Israel and which was the conferred upon this ummah. The highest reward that can be granted to a people in recognition of its righteousness is its designation, by God's command, to the leadership of the world in order to guide the entire human race to godliness and righteousness.

What is said here, therefore, is that the command to change the qiblah was a sign of installation of the Muslims to leadership. Hence, the Muslims should follow the directives of God if for no other reason than that ingratitude and disobedience might deprive them of the honour that had been bestowed upon them.

(152) '...Perhaps you will be guided to the right way' is indicative here of the regal appropriate for God's address to His creatures. The indication from a sovereign, while addressing his slave, that the latter could expect some favor from him is quite enough to make that slave rejoice and celebrate.

كَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا فِيْكُمْ رَسُوْلًا مِّنْكُمْ يَتْلُوْا عَلَيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِنَا وَيُزَكِّيْكُمْ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمْ مَّا لَمْ تَكُوْنُوْا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٥١﴾

(2-151) Just as when We sent among you a Messenger of yourselves, who recites to you Our Signs, purifies your lives, instructs you in the Book and in Wisdom, and instructs you what you did not know.

فَاذْكُرُوْنِيْٓ اَذْكُرْكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوْا لِيْ وَلَا تَكْفُرُوْنِ ﴿١٥٢﴾

(2-152) So remember Me and I shall remember you; give thanks to Me and do not be ungrateful to Me for My favors.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اسْتَعِيْنُوْا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلٰوةِ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ ﴿١٥٣﴾

(2-153) Believers! (153) Seek help in patience and in Prayer; Allah is with those that are patient. (154)

(153) Since the ummah has been invested with world leadership, a set of necessary directives is now provided for its guidance. Before laying down these directives it seemed necessary to caution the Muslims that the office which had been conferred on them was indeed no bed of roses. On the contrary, it was a great and perilous responsibility. Once they undertook it, they would be subjected to all kinds of afflictions, put to all kinds of trials and tribulations and made to bear all kinds of deprivation. If, however, the Muslims persisted along the path of God despite the perils they would be rewarded with God's favor in full measure.

(154) To acquire the strength that is needed to bear this heavy burden of responsibility the believers should do two things: they should develop patience and they should strengthen themselves by devoting themselves to Prayer.

Later we shall encounter elaborations which will show that 'patience' is a word embracing a whole set of moral virtues of the utmost importance. 'Patience' is indeed an indispensable key to success. Likewise, we shall later have occasion to note in some detail how Prayer prepares the Muslims, both as individuals and as a collective body, to carry out their mission.

وَلَا تَقُوْلُوْا لِمَنْ يُّقْتَلُ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ اَمْوَاتٌ ۭ بَلْ اَحْيَاۗءٌ وَّلٰكِنْ لَّا تَشْعُرُوْنَ ۱۵۴

(2-154) And do not say of those who are killed in the way of Allah that they are dead; they are alive even though you have no knowledge of their life. (155)

(155) The word 'death' as well as its general concept has a depressing effect. People have therefore been instructed not to refer to martyrs who laid down their lives for God as 'dead', since this might lead to the dissipation of the spirit which enables people to struggle and make sacrifices in God's cause. Instead, people have been instructed to bear in mind that anyone who lays down his life for God has in fact attained immortality. As well as being a statement of fact this also helps to arouse and sustain courage.

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوْعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْاَمْوَالِ وَالْاَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرٰتِ ۭ وَبَشِّرِ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ ۱۵۵

(2-155) We shall certainly test you by afflicting you with fear, hunger, loss of properties and lives and fruits. Give glad tidings, then, to those who remain patient;

الَّذِيْنَ اِذَآ اَصَابَتْهُمْ مُّصِيْبَةٌ ۙ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَاِنَّآ اِلَيْهِ رٰجِعُوْنَ ۱۵۶

(2-156) those who when any affliction smites them, they say: “Verily, we belong to Allah, and it is to Him that we are destined to return.” (156)

(156) 'Saying' does not signify the mere making of a statement. It means a statement which is accompanied by a deep conviction in one's heart: 'To Allah do we belong.' This being so, a man is bound to think that whatever has been sacrificed for God has in fact attained its legitimate end, for it has been spent in the way of the One to whom all things truly belong.

'And it is to Him that we are destined to return' refers to the fact that man will not stay forever in this world and will return, sooner or later, to God. And if man is indeed destined to return to God why should he not return to Him having spent his all, having staked his life for His sake? This alternative is preferable to the pursuit of self-aggrandizement and then meeting death either by sickness or accident.

اُولٰٓئِکَ عَلَیۡہِمۡ صَلَوٰتٌ مِّنۡ رَّبِّہِمۡ وَرَحۡمَۃٌ ۟ وَاُولٰٓئِکَ ہُمُ الۡمُہۡتَدُوۡنَ ﴿۱۵۷﴾

(2-157) Upon them will be the blessings and mercy of their Lord, and it is they who are rightly guided.

اِنَّ الصَّفَا وَالۡمَرۡوَۃَ مِنۡ شَعَآئِرِ اللّٰہِ ۚ فَمَنۡ حَجَّ الۡبَیۡتَ اَوِ اعۡتَمَرَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَیۡہِ اَنۡ یَّطَّوَّفَ بِہِمَا ؕ وَمَنۡ تَطَوَّعَ خَیۡرًا ۙ فَاِنَّ اللّٰہَ شَاکِرٌ عَلِیۡمٌ ﴿۱۵۸﴾

(2-158) Surely, al-Safa and al-Marwah are the symbols of Allah. Hence, whoever performs Hajj (Full Pilgrimage) (157) to the House (of Allah) or makes 'Umrah (Minor Pilgrimage), will find that it is no sin for him to ambulate between the two. (158) And whoever does a good work voluntarily (159) should know that Allah is Appreciative, All-Knowing.

(157) The pilgrimage to the Ka'bah along with a set of other rites on certain fixed dates of Dhu al-Hijjah is known as hajj. Pilgrimage at other times is known as 'Umrah.

(158) Safa and Marwah are the names of two hillocks near the Holy Mosque in Makka. To run between these two hillocks was among the rites which God had taught Abraham in connection with hajj. Later, when Pagan Ignorance prevailed in Makka and the neighboring regions, altars were built for Isaf at Safa and for Nai'lah at Marwah, and people began to circumambulate them. After the advent of the Prophet, when the light of Islam had spread to the people of Arabia, Muslims came to doubt whether running between Safa and Marwah was one of the original rites of Pilgrimage or was merely an invidious religious innovation of the Age of Ignorance. If it was in fact such, they feared they might be committing an act of polytheism.

Moreover, we learn from a Tradition transmitted from 'Aishah that even in pre-Islamic times the people of Madinah were not favorably disposed to this practice. Although they believed in al-Manat they did not believe in Isaf and Nai'lah. For these reasons, it was necessary, at the time of the change of the qiblah, to dispel popular misconceptions about this rite. It seemed necessary to tell people that running between these two hillocks was part of the original rites of Pilgrimage and that the sanctity, of Safa and Marwah, far from being an invidious innovation of the people of the Age of Ignorance, stemmed from the revealed Law of God.

(159) It is best that one should perform this ritual obligation with wholehearted devotion. But if devotion is lacking one is not thereby exempt from fulfilling one's obligation. One must perform this ritual if only out of a sense of duty.

اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ يَكۡتُمُوۡنَ مَاۤ اَنۡزَلۡنَا مِنَ الۡبَيِّنٰتِ وَالۡهُدٰى مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِ مَا بَيَّنّٰهُ لِلنَّاسِ فِى الۡكِتٰبِ ۙ اُولٰٓئِكَ يَلۡعَنُهُمُ اللّٰهُ وَيَلۡعَنُهُمُ اللّٰعِنُوۡنَ ۙ ١٥٩

(2-159) Those who conceal anything of the clear teachings and true guidance which We have sent down even

though We have made them clear in Our Book, Allah curses such people and so do all the cursers, [160]

(160) The biggest failure of the Jews was that they kept the teachings contained in the Book of God confined to a limited class of people, the rabbis and professional theologians, instead of spreading them. They did not allow this knowledge to filter through even to the Jewish masses let alone the non-Jewish peoples of the world. Later, when errors and corruptions spread among them owing to widespread ignorance the Jewish theologians made no serious effort to root them out. Moreover, in order to maintain their hold on the Jewish masses they lent their tacit approval to every corrupting deviation from the true faith that gained currency.

The Muslims are being admonished to refrain from this kind of behavior. The nation which has been charged with the guidance of the entire world is duty-bound to do its utmost to radiate true guidance, rather than keep it under lock and key as a miser hoards his money.

اِلَّا الَّذِيۡنَ تَابُوۡا وَاَصۡلَحُوۡا وَبَيَّنُوۡا فَاُولٰٓئِكَ اَتُوۡبُ عَلَيۡهِمۡ وَاَنَا التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيۡمُ ۱۶۰

(2-160) except those who repent and make amends and openly declare (what they had concealed). Such shall I pardon for I am Much- Relenting, Most Compassionate.

اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا وَمَاتُوۡا وَهُمۡ كُفَّارٌ اُولٰٓئِكَ عَلَيۡهِمۡ لَعۡنَةُ اللّٰهِ وَالۡمَلٰٓئِكَةِ وَالنَّاسِ اَجۡمَعِيۡنَ ۱۶۱

(2-161) As for those who disbelieved [161] and died disbelieving, surely the curse of Allah and of the angels and of all men is on them.

(161) The original meaning of kufr is to conceal. This lent the word a nuance of denial and it began to be used as an antonym of iman . Iman means to believe, to accept, and to recognize. Kufr, on the contrary, denotes refusal to believe, to deny, to reject. According to the Quran there are several possible forms of disbelief. One is to refuse either to believe in the existence of God, to acknowledge His sovereignty, to recognize Him as the only Lord of the Universe and of mankind or to recognize Him as the only Lord and the only object of worship and adoration. The second form of disbelief is when a man recognizes the existence of God but still refuses to accept His ordinances and directives as the only source of true guidance, and as the true law for his life. The third form of disbelief is when even though a man recognizes in principle that he ought to follow the guidance of God he refuses to believe in the Prophets who were the means of communicating God's guidance to man. The fourth form of disbelief is to differentiate between one Prophet and another and, out of parochialism and bigotry, to accept some Prophets and reject others. The fifth form of disbelief is the refusal to recognize, either totally or partially, the teachings communicated by the Prophets, on God's behalf, concerning the beliefs, the principles of morality, and the laws for fashioning human life. The sixth form of disbelief is where a person theoretically accepts all that he should accept but willfully disobeys God's ordinances and persists in this disobedience, and considers disobedience rather than obedience to God to be the true principle of life.

All these modes of thought and action are forms of rebellion towards God and the Quran characterizes each of them as kufr. In addition, the term kufr is used at several places in the Quran in the sense of ingratitude and in this usage it signifies the exact opposite of shukr (gratitude). Gratefulness consists in feeling thankful to one's benefactor, in duly recognizing the value of his benevolence, in making use of it in a manner pleasing to its bestower, and in being utterly loyal to him. Ingratitude denotes, on the contrary, that the man concerned has either failed to recognize the bounty of his benefactor, or considers it to be either the outcome of his own power and ability or else that of some other person's favour or intercession. Another form of ingratitude

consists in failing to recognize fully the worth of the bounty received and in either allowing it to be wasted or to be used in contravention of the will of the benefactor; this ingratitude includes infidelity and treachery towards the benefactor in disregard of his benevolence and kindness. This kind of kufr is known in ordinary language as ungratefulness.

خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ۚ لَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنْظَرُوْنَ ﴿١٦٢﴾

(2-162) Thus shall they abide and their chastisement shall not be lightened, nor shall they be given respite.

وَاِلٰهُكُمْ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ ۚ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ الرَّحْمٰنُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿١٦٣﴾

(2-163) Your God is One God, there is no god but He; the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate.

اِنَّ فِيْ خَلْقِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ الَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلْكِ الَّتِيْ تَجْرِيْ فِي الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مِنْ مَّآءٍ فَاَحْيَا بِهِ الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيْهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَآبَّةٍ ۖ وَّتَصْرِيْفِ الرِّيٰحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَآءِ وَالْاَرْضِ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿١٦٤﴾

(2-164) (To guide) those who use their reason (to this Truth) there are many Signs in the structure of the heavens and the earth, in the constant alternation of night and day, in the vessels which speed across the sea carrying goods that are of profit to people, in the water which Allah sends down from the sky and thereby quickens the earth after it was dead, and disperse over it all manner of animals, and in the changing courses of the winds and the clouds pressed into service between heaven and earth.(162)

(162) If a man were to observe the constant operation of this universe, reflect on it in a manner befitting a rational being, and think about it without either stubbornness or bias, he would find sufficient signs to convince him that this gigantic system is

absolutely subservient to the will of the Omnipotent and Wise Being, Who alone wields all power and authority. Moreover, this system seems to be such as to rule out all possibility of any interference from others whether independent of the Creator of the universe or in partnership with Him. Since this One True God is the Lord of all creation and none else is in possession of any power or authority, none is entitled to any share in His godhead or overlordship.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنۡ يَّتَّخِذُ مِنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ اَنۡدَادًا يُّحِبُّوۡنَهُمۡ كَحُبِّ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَالَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡۤا اَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِّلّٰهِ ؕ وَلَوۡ يَرَى الَّذِيۡنَ ظَلَمُوۡۤا اِذۡ يَرَوۡنَ الۡعَذَابَ ۙ اَنَّ الۡقُوَّةَ لِلّٰهِ جَمِيۡعًا ۙ وَّاَنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيۡدُ الۡعَذَابِ ﴿۱۶۵﴾

(2-165) Yet there are some who take others as equals to Allah [(163)] and love them as Allah alone should be loved; but those who (truly) believe, they love Allah more than all else. [(164)]

If only the wrong-doers were to perceive now – as they will perceive when they will see the chastisement – that all power belongs to Allah alone, and that Allah is severe in chastisement!

(163) There are certain attributes which belong exclusively to God. Moreover, there are certain duties that man owes to God by virtue of His being his Lord. The indictment of the Quran is that the people in question ascribe to others than God the attributes which are exclusively His and likewise consider others to be the rightful claimants of certain rights over man which belong only to God. To be Lord of the entire complex of causal relationships found in the universe, to dispense the needs and requirements of people, to deliver them from distress and affliction, to heed complaints and respond to lamentations and prayers, and having full knowledge of all that is apparent as well as all that is hidden, are the exclusive attributes of God.

Furthermore, there are certain rights which God alone may claim: that His creatures should recognize Him alone as their Sovereign, prostrate themselves before Him alone in recognition

of their bondage to Him, turn to Him alone for the fulfilment of their prayers, call Him alone for help and succor, place their trust is none save Him, centre their hopes and expectations only in His Munificence, and fear Him alone both in public and in private.

In the same way, being the only Absolute Sovereign of the universe, it befits none save God to lay down what is permitted and what is prohibited for His subjects, to prescribe their rights and duties, to command them what to do and what not to do, to direct them as to how the energy and resources bestowed on them, by God, should be expended.

Again, it is God alone Who can ask His subjects to acknowledge His sovereignty, to accept His commands as the source of law, to consider Him alone to be the Lord entitled to command men, to consider His commands supreme, and to turn to Him alone for correct guidance. Whoever either ascribes to any being other than God any of the aforementioned attributes or recognizes the claim of anyone save God to be entitled to any of the above-mentioned rights over His creatures is in fact setting up that being as a rival to God, and placing him on the same plane as God. By the same token, any individual or institution claiming to possess any of the exclusive attributes and rights of God (as mentioned above), is in fact claiming a position parallel and equal to that of God even though the claim to godhead may not have been categorically spelled out.

(164) True faith requires that a man should give absolute priority to seeking God's good pleasure and should hold nothing too dear to sacrifice for the sake of God.

اِذْ تَبَرَّاَ الَّذِ یۡنَ اتُّبِعُ ا مِنَ الَّذِ نَ اتَّبَعُ ا وَرَاَوُا الْعَذَابَ وَتَقَطَّعَتْ بِهِ مُ اِ اَسْبَابُ ﴿۱۶۶﴾

(2-166) At that moment those who have been followed will disown their followers, and they will see the chastisement, and their resources will be cut asunder.

وَقَالَ الَّذِيۡنَ اتَّبَعُوۡا لَوۡ اَنَّ لَنَا كَرَّةً فَنَتَبَرَّاَ مِنۡهُمۡ كَمَا تَبَرَّءُوۡا مِنَّا ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يُرِيۡهِمُ اللّٰهُ اَعۡمَالَهُمۡ حَسَرٰتٍ عَلَيۡهِمۡ ؕ وَمَا هُمۡ بِخٰرِجِيۡنَ مِنَ النَّارِ ﴿۱۶۷﴾

(2-167) And the followers will then say: “Oh if only we might return again, we would disown them as they have disowned us?” (165) Thus Allah will show them their works in a manner causing them bitter regrets. Never will they come out of the Fire.

(165) Here particular reference is made to the dismal end of those so-called religious leaders who mislead people, and of their gullible followers who fall easy prey to their deception. This has been done in order to warn the Muslims to beware of the errors which misled former nations, and to impress upon them the need to develop the capacity to distinguish between true and spurious leaders so as to avoid being led by the latter.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ كُلُوۡا مِمَّا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ حَلٰلًا طَيِّبًا وَّلَا تَتَّبِعُوۡا خُطُوٰتِ الشَّيۡطٰنِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَكُمۡ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيۡنٌ ﴿۱۶۸﴾

(2-168) O people! Eat of the lawful and pure things in the earth and follow not in the footsteps of Satan. (166) For surely he is your open enemy;

(166) The demand made here is that they should violate all those taboos in matters of food and drink which have their basis in superstitious beliefs or irrational usages.

اِنَّمَا يَاۡمُرُكُمۡ بِالسُّوۡٓءِ وَالۡفَحۡشَآءِ وَاَنۡ تَقُوۡلُوۡا عَلَى اللّٰهِ مَا لَا تَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿۱۶۹﴾

(2-169) he only commands you to do evil and commit acts of indecency and to ascribe to Allah the things concerning which you have no knowledge (that He really is their source). (167)

(167) The notion that all superstitious customs and taboos are God-given religious teachings is an example of satanic deception, pure and simple, since there is no evidence whatsoever to suggest that they are from God.

وَ اِذَا قِيۡلَ لَـهُمُ اتَّبِعُوۡا مَاۤ اَنۡزَلَ اللّٰهُ قَالُوۡا بَلۡ نَتَّبِعُ مَاۤ اَلۡفَيۡنَا عَلَيۡهِ اٰبَآءَنَا ؕ اَوَلَوۡ كَانَ اٰبَآؤُهُمۡ لَا يَعۡقِلُوۡنَ شَيۡـئًا وَّلَا يَهۡتَدُوۡنَ ﴿۱۷۰﴾

(2-170) And when they are told: “Follow what Allah has revealed,” they say: “No, we shall follow what we found our forefathers adhering to.” (168) What! Even if their forefathers were devoid of understanding and right guidance?

(168) The only possible argument and justification for these taboos was that they had been sanctified by the practice of their forefathers from whom they had allegedly come down generation after generation. Fickle-minded as they were, they deemed this argument to be sufficiently persuasive.

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا كَمَثَلِ الَّذِىۡ يَنۡعِقُ بِمَا لَا يَسۡمَعُ اِلَّا دُعَآءً وَّنِدَآءً ؕ صُمٌّۢ بُكۡمٌ عُمۡىٌ فَهُمۡ لَا يَعۡقِلُوۡنَ ﴿۱۷۱﴾

(2-171) Those who have refused to follow the Way of Allah resemble cattle; when the shepherd calls them they hear nothing except shouting and crying; (169) they are deaf, dumb and blind, and so they understand nothing.

(169) This parable has two aspects. On the one hand, it suggests that these people are like herds of irrational animals, dumb cattle,

that always follow their herdsmen, moving on as they hear their calls without understanding what they mean. (Thus these people follow their leaders even though they do not grasp where it is they are being led to - Ed.) On the other hand, it also suggests that when the Truth is preached to them they show such insensitivity to it that one may as well be addressing animals who merely comprehend sounds but are incapable of understanding their meaning. The expression lends itself to both interpretations.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا كُلُوْا مِنْ طَيِّبٰتِ مَا رَزَقْنٰكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوْا لِلّٰهِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ اِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُوْنَ ﴿١٧٢﴾

(2-172) Believers! Eat of the pure things wherewith We have provided you for sustenance and give thanks to Allah (170) if it is Him that you serve.

(170) The believers are told that if by having believed they have committed themselves to following the Law of God as they claim then they should abandon all taboos and prohibitions imposed by the pundits and priests, by the rabbis and church fathers, by the monks and recluses, and by their own forefathers. Although they were required to abstain from whatever had been prohibited by God, they ought to feel no compunction with regard to consuming all that He had permitted. This has also been alluded to in the saying of the Prophet reported in a Tradition in the following words: 'Whoever prays in our manner, turns towards our qiblah (in Prayer), and eats (the flesh) of our slaughtered (animals), that person is Muslim. (Bukhari, 'K. al-Salah', 28; 'K. al-Adahi', 12; Muslim, 'K. al-Adahi', 6; Nasai, 'K. al-Iman', 9; 'K. al-Dahaya', 17 - Ed.) This means that in spite of praying and facing towards the qiblah, a person is not fully assimilated into Islam as long as he maintains the pre-Islamic taboos in matters of eating and drinking and holds on to the fetters of superstition forged by the victims of Ignorance. A person's adherence to these taboos is indicative of the fact that the poison of Ignorance continues to flow in his veins.

اِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيۡكُمُ الۡمَيۡتَةَ وَالدَّمَ وَلَحۡمَ الۡخِنۡزِيۡرِ وَمَاۤ اُهِلَّ لِغَيۡرِ اللّٰهِ‌ۚ فَمَنِ اضۡطُرَّ غَيۡرَ بَاغٍ وَّلَا عَادٍ فَلَاۤ اِثۡمَ عَلَيۡهِ‌ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوۡرٌ رَّحِيۡمٌ ۱۷۳

(2-173) He has made unlawful to you only carrion and blood and the flesh of swine and that over which there has been pronounced the name of anyone other than Allah's. (171) But he who is constrained (to eat of them) – and he neither covets them nor exceeds the indispensable limit incurs no sin: Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate. (172)

(171) This applies to the flesh of an animal slaughtered in the name of anything and anyone other than God as well as to the food prepared as an offering to someone other than God. God alone is the master of everything - of the animal whose flesh we consume as well as of every other kind of food - and it is He Who has mercifully provided us with them. Hence, if it is appropriate to pronounce any name as an expression of gratitude, of consecration, it can only be the name of God. To use anyone else's name means that we believe that there is some other being either instead of or in addition to God which deserves to be acknowledged as our Lord and Benefactor.

(172) This verse grants permission to use prohibited things with three stipulations. First, one must be in a state of extreme compulsion, for example, being gravely ill or being so hungry and thirsty that one's very life is in danger, and a prohibited thing is all that is available to save one's life. Second, the person concerned should have no inclination to violate the Law of God. Third, in consuming the prohibited thing one should not exceed the limits of bare necessity. If a few bites or a few drops are enough to save one's life, one ought not to go beyond the absolute minimum.

اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ يَكۡتُمُوۡنَ مَاۤ اَنۡزَلَ اللّٰهُ مِنَ الۡكِتٰبِ وَيَشۡتَرُوۡنَ بِهٖ ثَمَنًا قَلِيۡلًا‌ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ مَا يَاۡكُلُوۡنَ فِىۡ بُطُوۡنِهِمۡ اِلَّا النَّارَ وَلَا يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللّٰهُ يَوۡمَ الۡقِيٰمَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيۡهِمۡ وَلَهُمۡ عَذَابٌ اَلِيۡمٌ ۱۷۴

(2-174) Those who conceal anything of the Book revealed by Allah and sell it away for a trifling gain are merely filling their bellies with Fire. [173] Allah will neither address them on the Day of Resurrection, nor shall He pronounce them “pure”. [174] A painful chastisement lies in store for them.

(173) This means that the blame for the growth of whole new codes consisting of superstitions, perverted customs, and unjustifiable taboos lay squarely on the shoulders of those religious scholars who had knowledge of the Scriptures but failed to transmit their knowledge to the common people. Moreover, later, when erroneous practices began to spread among them they remained mute spectators of this drama. Indeed, some of them kept willfully silent about these matters thinking that their interests would be better served if the Scripture remained a sealed book and its injunctions were kept beyond the access of the common people.

(174) This is a refutation of the false claims made by their religious leaders and a clarification of the misconceptions regarding their positions and privileges which these leaders had been spreading among the common people. They spared no efforts to give the impression that they were sacred beings and that anyone who attached himself to them would necessarily earn God's forgiveness through their intercession. Here God is telling them that He takes no notice of people who are unworthy to intercede for themselves, let alone able to intercede for others.

أُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيۡنَ اشۡتَرَوُا الضَّلٰلَةَ بِالۡهُدٰى وَالۡعَذَابَ بِالۡمَغۡفِرَةِ‌ ۚ فَمَاۤ اَصۡبَرَهُمۡ عَلَى النَّارِ ۝١٧٥

(2-175) They are the ones who bought error in exchange for true guidance, and chastisement in exchange for forgiveness. How patient they are in enduring the Fire!

ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ اللّٰهَ نَزَّلَ الۡكِتٰبَ بِالۡحَقِّ‌ؕ وَ اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ اخۡتَلَفُوۡا فِى الۡكِتٰبِ لَفِىۡ شِقَاقٍۢ بَعِيۡدٍ ۝١٧٦

(2-176) This is so because Allah revealed the Book with the Truth, but those who disagreed concerning the Book veered far away from the Truth.

لَيۡسَ الۡبِرَّ اَنۡ تُوَلُّوۡا وُجُوۡهَكُمۡ قِبَلَ الۡمَشۡرِقِ وَالۡمَغۡرِبِ وَلٰكِنَّ الۡبِرَّ مَنۡ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالۡيَوۡمِ الۡاٰخِرِ وَ الۡمَلٰٓئِكَةِ وَ الۡكِتٰبِ وَ النَّبِيّٖنَ وَاٰتَى الۡمَالَ عَلٰى حُبِّهٖ ذَوِى الۡقُرۡبٰى وَ الۡيَتٰمٰى وَ الۡمَسٰكِيۡنَ وَ ابۡنَ السَّبِيۡلِ وَالسَّآئِلِيۡنَ وَ فِى الرِّقَابِ وَاَقَامَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَى الزَّكٰوةَ وَالۡمُوۡفُوۡنَ بِعَهۡدِهِمۡ اِذَا عٰهَدُوۡا وَالصّٰبِرِيۡنَ فِى الۡبَاۡسَآءِ وَالضَّرَّآءِ وَحِيۡنَ الۡبَاۡسِ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيۡنَ صَدَقُوۡا وَ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الۡمُتَّقُوۡنَ ﴿۱۷۷﴾

(2-177) Righteousness does not consist in turning your faces towards the east or towards the west; [175] true righteousness consists in believing in Allah and the Last Day, the angels, the Book and the Prophets, and in giving away one's property in love of Him to one's kinsmen, the orphans, the poor and the wayfarer, and to those who ask for help, and in freeing the necks of slaves, and in establishing Prayer and dispensing the Zakah. True righteousness is attained by those who are faithful to their promise once they have made it and by those who remain steadfast in adversity and affliction and at the time of battle (between Truth and falsehood). Such are the truthful ones; such are the God-fearing.

(175) Turning one's face towards the east or the west is mentioned here only by way of illustration. The actual purpose of the verse is to emphasize that the observance of certain outward religious rites, the performance of certain formal religious acts out of conformism, and the manifestation of certain familiar forms of piety do not constitute that essential righteousness which alone carries weight with God and earns His recognition and approval.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا كُتِبَ عَلَيۡكُمُ الۡقِصَاصُ فِى الۡقَتۡلٰى ؕ اَلۡحُرُّ بِالۡحُرِّ وَالۡعَبۡدُ بِالۡعَبۡدِ وَالۡاُنۡثٰى بِالۡاُنۡثٰى ؕ فَمَنۡ عُفِىَ لَهٗ مِنۡ اَخِيۡهِ شَىۡءٌ فَاتِّبَاعٌ بِالۡمَعۡرُوۡفِ وَاَدَآءٌ اِلَيۡهِ بِاِحۡسَانٍ ؕ ذٰلِكَ تَخۡفِيۡفٌ مِّنۡ رَّبِّكُمۡ وَرَحۡمَةٌ ؕ فَمَنِ اعۡتَدٰى بَعۡدَ ذٰلِكَ فَلَهٗ عَذَابٌ اَلِيۡمٌ ﴿۱۷۸﴾

(2-178) Believers! Retribution is prescribed for you in cases of killing: [176] if a freeman is guilty then the freeman; if a slave is guilty then the slave; if a female is guilty, then the female. [177]

But if something of a murderer's guilt is remitted by his brother (178) this should be adhered to in fairness, [179] and payment be made in a goodly manner. This is an alleviation and a mercy from your Lord; and for him who commits excess after that [180] there is a painful chastisement.

(176) Retribution, that is, blood revenge, is based on the principle that what a person has done to others ought to be done to him. This does not mean that the murderer should be put to death in exactly the same manner as he killed but that the murderer should be subjected to the same act, i.e. killing, as that to which he subjected his victim.

(177) In pre-Islamic Arabia people tried to take blood revenge upon the murderer's family and tribe, and the retaliation corresponded to the value placed on the blood of the victim. Their desire for revenge was not quenched merely by putting the murderer to death. They preferred to put to death tens and even hundreds of people to avenge the one life they had lost. If a respected member of their tribe was killed by an ordinary member of another, it was not deemed enough to put to death the actual murderer. They preferred to kill a man of the murderer's tribe equal in standing to the victim, and even several members of the murderer's tribe. However, if the victim was a man of humble standing from another tribe, and the murderer from their tribe happened to be a man of high standing, they were unwilling to permit the execution of the murderer.

This attitude is not confined to the Ignorance of that bygone age. Even today those nations that are supposedly the most civilized will often proclaim, officially and quite brazenly,

that if one of their citizens is killed they will execute scores of the killer's compatriots. In addition we often hear that to avenge the murder of one person a large number of hostages belonging to a subject nation have been shot dead. One of the 'civilized' nations of the present century subjected the whole Egyptian nation to blood revenge because one of their officials, Sir Lee Stack, was killed by an Egyptian. The courts of justice of these so-called civilized nations have been known to refrain from passing the death sentence on convicted homicides when they happened to be members of the ruling nation while their victims belonged to the subject nation. It is iniquities such as these that God seeks to end by means of the directive contained in this verse. What God says here is that the killer ought to be put to death irrespective of his status and that of the victim.

(178) The very use of the word 'brother' in this context suggests that as a general rule one ought to incline towards leniency. Despite the bitterness felt towards someone who has shed the blood of, say, one's father, the murderer is still one's brother by virtue of being a member of the human family. Hence if one who has been wronged can overcome the vengeful spirit aroused by his erring brother's deed, this attitude of forgiveness will be worthy of his humanity.

This verse also makes it clear that according to the Islamic penal law the question of homicide can be settled by the mutual consent of the two parties. It is the prerogative of the heirs of the victim to forgive the murderer, and if it is exercised not even a judge has the power to insist on carrying out the death sentence. In such a case, however, as the following verse mentions, the murderer will be made to pay blood money.

(179) The term ma'ruf occurs quite frequently in the Quran. It refers to conduct which is reckoned fair and equitable by the generality of disinterested people. The generally accepted usages and customs of life are called 'urf and ma'ruf in Islamic terminology, and they are considered valid in all those matters not specifically regulated by the Shar'iah.

(180) Excess might consist of trying to avenge the blood of the murdered man even after his heirs have settled the matter and received blood money or of efforts on the part of the murderer to delay the payment of blood money thus repaying the heirs of the victim with ingratitude for their kindness and goodwill.

وَلَكُمْ فِى الْقِصَاصِ حَيٰوةٌ يّٰأُولِى الْاَلْبٰبِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿١٧٩﴾

(2-179) People of understanding, there is life for you in retribution (181) that you may guard yourselves against violating the Law.

(181) This refutes another notion of Ignorance, a notion ingrained in the minds of many people, both past and present. On the one hand there are some people who, entrenched in Ignorance, tend to exceed the limits of moderation in revenge. At the other end of the spectrum stand those who are opposed in principle to the concept of executing a murderer. They have conducted such intense, world-wide propaganda against the death penalty that it has become abhorrent to many people. In fact the impact of this propaganda has been so great that in many countries the death penalty has been abolished altogether.

The Quran, however, addresses itself on this question to wise and intelligent people and cautions them against such immoderate leniency by proclaiming that the survival of human society rests on the application of the death penalty for homicide. A society which holds inviolable the lives of those who disregard the sanctity of human life is in fact rearing snakes and serpents. To save the life of one murderer is to risk the lives of many innocent human beings.

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمْ اِذَا حَضَرَ اَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ اِنْ تَرَكَ خَيْرَا الْوَصِيَّةُ لِلْوٰلِدَيْنِ وَالْاَقْرَبِيْنَ
بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿١٨٠﴾

(2-180) It is decreed that when death approaches, those of you who leave behind property shall bequeath equitably to parents and kinsmen. This is an obligation on the God-fearing. (182)

(182) This injunction relates to a period of time when no rules had been laid down for the distribution of inheritance. Thus everyone was required to make testamentary disposal of their property so as to ensure that no disputes arose in the family and no legitimate claimant to inheritance was deprived of his due share. Later when God revealed a set of laws regarding the distribution of inheritance see (**Quran 4: 11 ff**.), the Prophet elucidated further the laws relating to testamentary disposition and inheritance by expounding two rules.

First, that no person can make any will regarding his estate in favour of any of his legal heirs. Their portions were laid down in the Quran and neither increase nor decrease in this was permissible, nor could any heir be disinherited, nor anything willed in favour of any heir over and above his legal portion. (See the Tradition: 'There may be no will in favour of the heir.' See Abu Da'ud, 'Al-Wasaya', 6; Tirmidhi, 'Al-Wasaya', 5; Nasa'i, 'Al-Wasaya', 5; Ibn Majah, 'Al-Wasaya', 5 - Ed.)

Second, that testamentary disposition might be made to the extent of one third of the estate, but no more. (See Bukhari, 'Al-Wasaya', 2 and 3; Muslim, 'Al-Wasiyah', 5-10; Abu Da'ud, 'Al-Wasaya', 2 - Ed.)

The purpose underlying these explanatory directives of the Prophet seems to be that at least two-thirds of the estate should be left aside to be distributed among the legal heirs according to the Quranic rules, and that a will could be made in respect of the whole or part of the remaining one-third. This could be made in favour of either relatives, whether close or distant, who are not legal heirs, or others not related by the blood-tie but who are deserving of assistance. Likewise, a will could be made in favour of charitable causes which are found worthy of support.

In later times people began to regard this directive regarding testamentary disposal as a recommendation only. The result was that this rule fell largely into disuse. It is significant, however, that the Quran mentions it as 'an obligation on the God-fearing'. Were Muslims to make this injunction an operative institution no trace would remain of the problems which agitate their minds respecting the Islamic law of inheritance , for example grandchildren whose parents had predeceased their paternal or maternal grandparents and who, under Islamic law, were not entitled to inherit from their grandparents. (The author suggests that re-activating the Quranic directive on testamentary disposal is the answer to this and similar problems - Ed.)

فَمَنۢ بَدَّلَهٗ بَعْدَمَا سَمِعَهٗ فَاِنَّمَاۤ اِثْمُهٗ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ يُبَدِّلُوْنَهٗ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿۱۸۱﴾

(2-181) Then if anyone alters the will after hearing it, this sin shall be upon them who alter. Surely Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

فَمَنْ خَافَ مِنْ مُّوْصٍ جَنَفًا اَوْ اِثْمًا فَاَصْلَحَ بَيْنَهُمْ فَلَاۤ اِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۱۸۲﴾

(2-182) He who suspects that the testator has committed an error or injustice and then brings about a settlement among the parties concerned incurs no sin. Surely Allah is Much-Forgiving, Most Compassionate.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿۱۸۳﴾

(2-183) Believers! Fasting is enjoined upon you, as it was enjoined upon those before you, that you become God-fearing. (183)

(183) Like most other injunctions of Islam those relating to fasting were revealed gradually. In the beginning the Prophet (peace be on him) had instructed the Muslims to fast three days in every month, though this was not obligatory. When the injunction in the present verse was later revealed in 2 A.H., a degree of relaxation was introduced: it was stipulated that those who did not fast despite their capacity to endure it were obliged to feed one poor person as an expiation for each day of obligatory fasting missed see (Verse 184). Another injunction was revealed later see (Verse 185) and here the relaxation in respect of able-bodied persons was revoked. However, for the sick, the traveller, the pregnant, the breast-feeding women and the aged who could not endure fasting, the relaxation was retained. (See Bukhari, 'Tafsir al-Quran', 25; Tirmidhi, 'Sawm', 21; Nasai, 'Siyam', 51, 62, 64; Ibn Majah, 'Siyam', 12; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 3, p. 104; vol. 4, pp. 347 and 418; vol. 5, p. 29 - Ed.)

اَيَّامًا مَّعْدُوْ ذٰتٍ فَمَ كَانَ مِ كُمْ مَّرِيضًا اَوْ عَلٰى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّ مِّنْ اَيَّامٍ اُخَرَ وَعَلَى الَّذِيْنَ يُطِيْ قُوْنَهٗ فِدْيَ طَعَامُ مِسْكِيْ نٍ فَمَ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فُ وَ خَيْرٌ لَّ وَاَ تَصُوْ وْا خَيْ رٌ لَّكُمْاِ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ١٨٤

(2-184) Fasting is for a fixed number of days, and if one of you be sick, or if one of you be on a journey, you will fast the same number of other days later on. For those who are capable of fasting (but still do not fast) there is a redemption: feeding a needy man for each day missed. Whoever voluntarily does more good than is required, will find it better for him; (184) and that you should fast is better for you, if you only know. (185)

(184) This act of extra merit could either be feeding more than the one person required or both fasting and feeding the poor.

(185) Here ends the early injunction with regard to fasting which was revealed in 2 A.H. prior to the Battle of Badr. The verses that follow were revealed about one year later and are linked with the preceding verses since they deal with the same subject.

شَ ۝رُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِیۡۤ اُنۡزِلَ فِیۡهِ الۡقُرۡاٰنُ هُدًی لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَیِّنٰتٍ مِّنَ الۡهُدٰی وَالۡفُرۡقَانِ ۚ فَمَنۡ شَهِدَ مِنۡکُمُ الشَّهۡرَ فَلۡیَصُمۡهُ ؕ وَمَنۡ کَانَ مَرِیۡضًا اَوۡ عَلٰی سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنۡ اَیَّامٍ اُخَرَ ؕ یُرِیۡدُ اللّٰهُ بِکُمُ الۡیُسۡرَ وَلَا یُرِیۡدُ بِکُمُ الۡعُسۡرَ ۫ وَلِتُکۡمِلُوا الۡعِدَّةَ وَلِتُکَبِّرُوا اللّٰهَ عَلٰی مَا هَدٰىکُمۡ وَلَعَلَّکُمۡ تَشۡکُرُوۡنَ ۝۱۸۵

(2-185) During the month of Ramadan the Quran was sent down as a guidance to the people with Clear Signs of the true guidance and as the Criterion (between right and wrong). So those of you who live to see that month should fast it, and whoever is sick or on a journey should fast the same number of other days instead. Allah wants ease and not hardship for you so that you may complete the number of days required, (186) magnify Allah for what He has guided you to, and give thanks to Him. (187)

(186) Whether a person should or should not fast while on a journey is left to individual discretion. We find that among the Companions who accompanied the Prophet on journeys some fasted whereas others did not; none objected to the conduct of another. The Prophet himself did not always fast when travelling. On one journey a person was so overwhelmed by hunger that he collapsed; the Prophet disapproved when he learned that the man had been fasting. During wars the Prophet used to prevent people from fasting so that they would not lack energy for the fight. It has been reported by 'Umar that two military expeditions took place in the month of Ramadan. The first was the Battle of Badr and the second the conquest of Makka. On both occasions the Companions abstained from fasting, and, according to Ibn 'Umar, on the occasion of the conquest of Makka the Prophet proclaimed that people should not fast since it was a day of fighting. In other Traditions the Prophet is reported to have said that people should not fast when they had drawn close to the enemy, since abstention from fasting would lead to greater strength. (See Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 3, p. 329, and vol. 5, pp. 205 and 209: Darimi, ' Sawm', 41; Muslim, 'Siyarn', 92; Nasai, 'Siyam', 47; Bukhari, 'Maghazi', 71; Muslim, 'Siyam', 102; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 3, pp. 21, 35, 46; Tirmidhi, 'Sawm', 18, Nasa'i. 'Siyam', 52; Bukhari ,

'Jihad', 29; Muslim, 'Siyam', 98; Abu Da'ud, 'Sawm' 42; Muslim, 'Siyam', 102, 103, 105; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad vol. 2, 99; Tirmidhi, : 'Sawm', 19 - Ed.)

(186) The duration of a journey for which it becomes permissible for a person to abstain from fasting is not absolutely clear from any statement of the Prophet, (cf. relevant Traditions Abu Da'ud, 'Sawm', 46, 47; Nasai , 'Siyam', 54, 55; Malik, Muaatta', 'Siyam', 21, 27 - Ed.) In addition the practice of the Companions was not uniform. It would seem that any journey which is commonly regarded as such, and which is attended by the circumstances generally associated with travelling, should be deemed sufficient justification for not fasting.

Jurists agree that one does not have to fast on the day of commencing a journey; one may eat either at the point of departure or after the actual journey has commenced. Either course is sanctioned by the practice of the Companions. Jurists, however, are not agreed as to whether or not the residents of a city under attack may abstain from fasting even though they are not actually travelling. Ibn taymiyah favours the permissibility of abstention from fasting and supports his view with very forceful arguments.

(187) This indicates that fasting need not be confined, exclusively, to Ramadan. For those who fail to fast during that month owing to some legitimate reason God has kept the door of compensation open during other months of the year so that they need not be deprived of the opportunity to express their gratitude to Him for His great bounty, in revealing the Quran.

It should he noted here that fasting in Ramadan has not only been declared an act of worship and devotion and a means to nourish piety but has also been characterized as an act of gratefulness to God for His great bounty of true guidance in the form of the Quran. In fact, the best way of expressing gratitude for someone's bounty or benevolence is to prepare oneself, to the

best of one's ability, to achieve the purpose for which that bounty has been bestowed. The Quran has been revealed so that we may know the way that leads to God's good pleasure, follow that way ourselves and direct the world along it. Fasting is an excellent means by which to prepare ourselves for shouldering this task. Hence fasting during the month of the revelation of the Quran is more than an act of worship and more than an excellent course of moral training; it is also an appropriate form for the expression of our thankfulness to God for the bounty of the Quran.

وَ اِذَا سَاَلَکَ عِبَادِیۡ عَنِّیۡ فَاِنِّیۡ قَرِیۡبٌ ؕ اُجِیۡبُ دَعۡوَۃَ الدَّاعِ اِذَا دَعَانِ ۙ فَلۡیَسۡتَجِیۡبُوۡا لِیۡ وَ لۡیُؤۡمِنُوۡا بِیۡ لَعَلَّہُمۡ یَرۡشُدُوۡنَ ﴿۱۸۶﴾

(2-186) (O Muhammad), when My servants ask you about Me, tell them I am quite near; I hear and answer the call of the caller whenever he calls Me. Let them listen to My call and believe in Me; (188) perhaps they will be guided aright. (189)

(188) Even though people can neither see God nor subject Him to any other form of sense perception this should not make them feel that God is remote from them. On the contrary, He is so close to each and every person that whenever any person so wishes he can communicate with his Lord. So much so that God hears and responds even to the prayers which remain within the innermost recesses of the heart.

People exhaust themselves by approaching false and powerless beings whom they foolishly fancy to be their deities but who have neither the power to hear nor to grant their prayers. But God, the omnipotent Lord and the absolute Master of this vast universe, Who wields all power and authority, is so close to human beings that they can always approach Him without the intercession of any intermediaries, and can put to Him their prayers and requests.

(189) This announcement of God's closeness to man may open his eyes to the Truth, may turn him to the right way wherein lies his success and well-being.

اُحِلَّ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الرَّفَثُ اِلٰى نِسَآئِكُمْ ؕ هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَّكُمْ وَاَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَّهُنَّ ؕ عَلِمَ اللّٰهُ اَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَخْتَانُوْنَ اَنْفُسَكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَفَا عَنْكُمْ ۚ فَالْـٰٔنَ بٰشِرُوْهُنَّ وَابْتَغُوْا مَا كَتَبَ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ ۚ وَكُلُوْا وَاشْرَبُوْا حَتّٰى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْاَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْاَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ ۖ ثُمَّ اَتِمُّوا الصِّيَامَ اِلَى الَّيْلِ ۚ وَلَا تُبٰشِرُوْهُنَّ وَاَنْتُمْ عٰكِفُوْنَ ۙ فِى الْمَسٰجِدِ ؕ تِلْكَ حُدُوْدُ اللّٰهِ فَلَا تَقْرَبُوْهَا ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ اٰيٰتِهٖ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿۱۸۷﴾

(2-187) It has been made lawful for you to go in to your wives during the night of the fast. They are your garment, and you are theirs.(190) Allah knows that you used to betray yourselves and He mercifully relented and pardoned you. So you may now associate intimately with your wives and benefit from the enjoyment Allah has made lawful for you, (191) and eat and drink (192) at night until you can discern the white streak of dawn against the blackness of the night;(193) then (give up all that and) complete your fasting until night sets in. (194)

But do not associate intimately with your wives during the period when you are on retreat in the mosques. (195) These are the bounds set by Allah; do not, then, even draw near them. (196) Thus does Allah make His Signs clear to mankind that they may stay away from evil.

(190) Just as nothing intervenes between a person's body and his clothes, so nothing can intervene between a man and his wife; it is a relationship of inalienable intimacy.

(191) Although there was no categorical ordinance in the early days prohibiting sexual intercourse between husband and wife during the nights of Ramadan, people generally assumed that this

was not permissible. Despite the feeling that their action was either not permitted or was at least disapproved of, they did at times approach their wives. Such a betrayal of conscience can encourage a sinful disposition. God, therefore, first reproaches them with their lack of integrity, for this is what was objectionable. As for the act itself, God makes it clear that it is quite permissible. Henceforth they might engage in sexual intercourse as a perfectly lawful act unencumbered by feelings of guilt.

(192) In this connection, too, there was a misapprehension at first. Some thought that eating and drinking were absolutely prohibited after the performance of the 'Isha' (Night) Prayer. Others thought that one could eat and drink so long as one had not fallen asleep, but that if one had it was not permissible to eat on reawakening. These were people's own fancies and often caused great inconvenience. This verse seeks to remove all such misconceptions. It clearly lays down the duration of the fast: from dawn until sunset. Between sunset and dawn it is permissible to eat, to drink, and to indulge in the legitimate gratification of sexual desires.

At the same time the Prophet introduced the pre-fasting repast, recommending a good meal just before dawn.

(193) In fixing the time of obligatory rites, Islam has been mindful that these timings should be so clear and simple that people, at all stages of development, should be able to follow them. This is why Islam bases its timing on conspicuous natural phenomena and not on the clock.

Some people object that this principle of timing is untenable in areas close to the poles, where night and day each last for about six months. This objection is based on a very superficial knowledge of geography. In point of fact neither day nor night lasts for six months in those areas - not in the sense in which people living near the Equator conceive of night and day.

The signs of morning and evening appear at the poles with unfailing regularity and it is on this basis that people time their sleeping and waking, their professional work, their play and recreation. Even in the days before watches were common, the people of countries like Finland, Norway and Greenland used to fix the hours of the day and night by means of various signs that appeared on the horizon. Just as those signs helped them to determine their schedules in other matters, so they should enable them to time their various Prayers, the pre-fast meal and the breaking of the fast.

(194) 'Complete your fasting until night sets in' means that the time of fasting ends with nightfall, i.e. sunset marks the breaking of the fast. The precise time of the end of the pre-dawn repast is when a lean strip of aurora appears at the eastern end of the horizon and begins to grow. The time to break one's fast starts when the darkness of night seems to have begun to appear over the eastern horizon.

In our own time, some people have adopted an attitude of extreme caution with regard to the time of both the end and start of fasting. The Law has not fixed these schedules with rigid precision. If a person wakes up just at the crack of dawn it is proper for him to eat and drink hastily. According to a Tradition the Prophet said: 'If anyone of you hears the call for [the morning] Prayer while he is eating he should not stop immediately, but should finish eating to the extent of his bare need.' (Abu Da'ud. Siyam', 14 - Ed.) Similarly, one need not wait for the light of day to disappear fully before breaking the fast. The Prophet, for instance, used to ask Bilil to bring him something to drink as soon as the sun had set. Bilal expressed his astonishment, pointing out that the light of day could still be observed. To this the Prophet replied that the time of fasting came to an end when the darkness of night began to rise from the east. (Muslim, 'Siyam', 10; Abu Da'ud, 'Siyam', 15; etc. - Ed.)

(195) 'On retreat in the mosque' refers to the religious practice of spending the last ten days of Ramadan in the mosque,

consecrating this time to the remembrance of God. In this state, known as i'tikaf, one may go out of the mosque only for the absolutely necessary requirements of life, but one must stay away from gratifying one's sexual desire.

(196) The directive here is neither to exceed nor draw near the limits set by God. This means that it is dangerous for a man to skirt the boundaries of disobedience; prudence demands that one should keep some distance from these lest one's steps inadvertent lead one to cross them. The same principle has been enunciated in a Tradition in which the Prophet said: 'Even sovereign has an enclosed pasture and the enclosed pasture of God consists of His prohibitions. So, whosoever keeps grazing around that pasture is likely to fall into it.' (Bukhari, 'Iman', 36; 'Buyu'', 3; Muslim, 'Musaqah', 107; Abu Da'd, 'Buyu", 3; Tirmidhi, 'Buyu", 1; Nasa'i, 'Buyu?, 3; 'Ashribah', 50; Ibn Majah, 'Fitan', 14 - Ed.)

It is a pity that many people. who are not conversant with the spirit of the Shari'ah (Islamic law), insist on using these boundaries to the limits. Many religious scholars exert themselves in finding out arguments to justify this attitude, and a point is thus reached where only a hair's breadth separates obedience from disobedience. Consequently many people fall prey to disobedience, even to downright error and wrong-doing. For once a man arrives at this point he is seldom capable of discerning between right and wrong, and maintaining the absolute self-control needed to keep within the lawful limits.

وَلَا تَاْكُلُوْٓا اَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبٰطِلِ وَتُدْلُوْا بِهَآ اِلَى الْحُكَّامِ لِتَاْكُلُوْا فَرِيْقًا مِّنْ اَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ بِالْاِثْمِ وَاَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ١٨٨

(2-188) Do not usurp one another’s possessions by false means, nor proffer your possessions to the authorities so that you may sinfully and knowingly usurp a portion of another’s possessions. (197)

(197) One meaning of this verse is that people should not try to seek illegitimate benefits by bribing magistrates. Another meaning is that when a person is aware that the property, he claims rightfully belongs to someone else, he should not file a judicial petition either because the other party lacks the evidence to support their case or because by trickery and cunning the petitioner can usurp that property. It is possible that the judicial authority would decide the case in favour of the false claimant on the basis of the formal strength of the claim, but as this judicial verdict would merely be the result of the chicanery to which the claimant had resorted he would not become its rightful owner. In spite of the judgement of the court the property would remain unlawful for him in the sight of God. It has been reported in a Tradition that the Prophet said: 'I am merely a human being and you bring to me your disputes. It is possible that some of you will be more impressive in argument than others, so that 1 may give judgement in favour of one on the basis of what 1 hear. Beware that if 1 award to someone what belongs to his brother, I will have assigned to him a lump of Fire.' (Bukhari, 'Shahadat', 27; Muslim, 'Aqdiayah', 4; Abu Da'ud , 'Aqdiayah', 7; Tirmidhi, 'Ahkam', 11, 18; Nasai 'Qudat', 12, 33; 1bn Majah, 'AhkAm', 5, etc. - Ed.)

يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ عَنِ الْاَهِلَّةِ ۭ قُلْ هِىَ مَوَاقِيْتُ لِلنَّاسِ وَالْحَجِّ ۭ وَلَيْسَ الْبِرُّ بِاَنْ تَاْتُوا الْبُيُوْتَ مِنْ ظُهُوْرِهَا وَلٰكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنِ اتَّقٰى ۚ وَاْتُوا الْبُيُوْتَ مِنْ اَبْوَابِهَا ۠ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ۝١٨٩

(2-189) People question you concerning the phases of the moon. Say: “They are signs to determine time for the sake of people and for the Pilgrimage.” (198) Also tell them: “True righteousness is not that you enter your houses from the back; righteousness lies in fearing Allah. So, enter your houses by their doors, and fear Allah that you might attain true success.” (199)

(198) The waxing and waning of the moon has attracted men's attentions throughout the ages and all kinds of fanciful ideas, superstitions and rituals have been, and are still today, associated

with it. The moon was considered the basis of good and bad omens. Certain dates were considered auspicious and others inauspicious for starting journeys, for beginning new tasks, for weddings and so on on the ground that the rising and setting of the moon, its waxing and waning and its eclipse affect human destiny. The Arabs too had their share of such superstitions. It was therefore natural that enquiries regarding such matters should be addressed to the Prophet.

In response, God says that the waxing and waning of the moon is nothing more than a physical phenomenon. By its appearance in the firmament the moon enables man to divide his year and it can thus be considered nature's own calendar. Particular reference is made to Hajj because it occupied the position of highest importance in the religious, cultural and economic life of the Arabs. Four months of the year were specified since they were the months of major and minor Pilgrimage (Hajj and 'Umrah). During these months there was to be no warfare and the routes were completely safe for travelling. Thanks to the peace and tranquillity thus established, trade and commerce prospered.

(199) One superstitious custom of the Arabs was that once they entered the state of consecration for Pilgrimage they did not enter their houses by the door. Instead, they either leapt over the walls from the rear or climbed through windows which they had specially erected for that purpose. On returning from journeys, too, they entered their houses from the rear. In this verse this superstitious custom is denounced, as are all superstitious customs; it is pointed out that the essence of moral excellence consists of fearing God and abstaining from disobeying His commands. Those meaningless customs by which people felt bound, out of blind adherence to the traditions of their forefathers, and which had no effect at all on man's ultimate destiny, had nothing to do with moral excellence.

وَقٰتِلُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ الَّذِيْنَ يُقٰتِلُوْنَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوْا ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِيْنَ ۝١٩٠

(2-190) Fight in the way of Allah [200] against those who fight against you but do not transgress, [201] for Allah does not love transgressors.

(200) The believers are asked to fight those who hindered their efforts in the cause of God, and acted with hostility towards them merely because they sought to fashion human life according to the revealed guidance of God. Earlier, when they were weak and scattered, the Muslims were asked merely to preach and be patient with the wrongful repression meted out to them by their opponents. However, now that a small city state had been established in Madinah they were commanded for the first time to unsheathe their swords against those who had resorted to armed hostility against their movement of reform. It was some time after this injunction that the Battle of Badr took place, to be followed by several other battles.

(201) The believers are told that material interests should not be the motivation for their fighting, that they should not take up arms against those who were not in opposition to the true faith, that they should not resort to unscrupulous methods or to the indiscriminate killing and pillage which characterized the wars of the pre-Islamic era, the Age of Ignorance. The excesses alluded to in this verse are acts such as taking up arms against women and children, the old and the injured, mutilation of the dead bodies of the enemy, uncalled-for devastation through the destruction of fields and livestock, and other similar acts of injustice and brutality. In the Hadith all these acts have been prohibited. The real intent of the verse is to stress that force should be used only when its use is unavoidable, and only to the extent that is absolutely necessary.

وَاقْتُلُوْ هُمْ حَيْثُ ثَقِفْتُمُوْهُمْ وَاَخْرِجُوْهُم مِّنْ حَيْ ثُ اَخْرَجُوْكُمْ وَالْفِتْنَةُ اَشَدُّ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ وَلَا تُقٰتِلُوْ هُمْ عِ نْدَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ حَتّٰى يُقٰتِلُوْكُمْ فِيْ فَاِ قٰتَلُوْكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوْهُمْ كَذٰلِكَ جَزَآءُ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ١٩١

(2-191) Kill them whenever you confront them and drive them out from where they drove you out. (For though killing is sinful) wrongful persecution is even worse than killing. [202] Do not fight against them near the Holy Mosque unless they fight against you; but if they fight against you kill them, for that is the reward of such unbelievers.

(202) Here the word fitnah is used in the sense of 'persecution'. It refers to a situation whereby either a person or a group is subjected to harassment and intimidation for having accepted, as true, a set of ideas contrary to those currently held, and for striving to effect reforms in the existing order of society by preaching what is good and condemning what is wrong. Such a situation must be changed, if need be, by the force of arms.

Bloodshed is bad, but when one group of people imposes its ideology and forcibly prevents others from accepting the truth, then it becomes guilty of an even more serious crime. In such circumstances, it is perfectly legitimate to remove that oppressive group by the force of arms.

فَاِنِ انۡتَهَوۡا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوۡرٌ رَّحِيۡمٌ ﴿۱۹۲﴾

(2-192) Then if they desist, know well that Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most Compassionate. [203]

(203) God, in whom the believers have faith, is forgiving and ready to pardon even the worst criminals and sinners after they have renounced their arrogant defiance towards Him. It is suggested that this attribute of God should be reflected in the behavior of the believers as well. As the saying goes: 'Mould your morals according to the attributes of God.' Hence, Whenever the believers have to resort to armed conflict, they should do so not for the sake of quenching their thirst for vengeance but in the cause of God's religion. Their conflict with any group should last

only as long as that group resists the cause of God. As soon as it gives up this resistance hostility should cease.

وَقٰتِلُوْ هُمْ حَتّٰى لَا تَكُوْنَ فِتْنَةٌ وَّيَكُوْ نَ الدِّيْنُ لِلّٰهِ فَاِنِ ا نْ ا فَلَا عُدْوٰنَ اِلَّا عَلَى الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ١٩٣

(2-193) Keep on fighting against them until mischief ends and the way prescribed by Allah prevails.[204] But if they desist, then know that hostility is directed only against the wrong-doers. [205]

(204) Here the term fitnah is used in a different sense from the one in which it was used above see( verse 191). It is evident from the context that fitnah refers here to the state of affairs wherein the object of obedience is someone other than God. Hence the purpose of a believer's fighting is that this fitnah should cease and obedience should be consecrated to God alone.

An investigation of the usages of the word din (which occurs in this verse) reveals that the core of its meaning is obedience. In its technical usage, the word refers to that system of life which arises as a result of a person recognizing someone as his Lord and Sovereign and committing himself to following his commands and ordinances. This explanation of the word din makes it quite clear that when some human beings establish their godhead and absolute dominance over others, this state of affairs is one of fitnah. Islam seeks to put an end to this and replace it by a state of affairs in which people live in obedience to the laws of God alone.

(205) What is meant here by 'desisting' is not the abandonment of unbelief and polytheism on the part of the unbelievers but rather their desistance from active hostility to the religion enjoined by God. The unbeliever, the polytheist, the atheist, has each been, empowered to hold on to his beliefs and to worship who and whatever he wishes. In order to deliver these people from their error, Muslims are required to counsel them and tell them where their good lies. But Muslims ought not to try to

achieve this purpose by resorting to force. At the same time, these misguided people have no right to either enforce the false laws of their own contriving instead of the laws of God or to drive the people of God to bondage of others than God. In order to put an end to this fitnah, both persuasion and force be used, whenever and to the extent to which each of the two is needed, and a true believer will not rest until the unbelievers give up this fitnah.

The statement that hostility is meant only against wrong-doers seems to imply that when the true system of life replaces the false one, ordinary people should be granted a general amnesty. At the same time, however, it would be justifiable to punish those who exceeded all limits in their hostility to the Truth, at the time when they held the reins of power. Yet in dealing with such people, it becomes the true believers, after they have one final victory, to adopt a general attitude of forgiveness and tolerance towards the vanquished rather than subject them to revenge for the wrongs they committed in the past. Those criminals whose records were exceptionally bad could, however, be punished. The Prophet (peace be on him), availed himself of this permission in respect of some notorious enemies whose hostility had exceeded all limits, even though pardon and forgiveness behoved none more than him. Thus 'Uqbah ibn Abi Mu'avt and Nadr b. Harith from among the captives of the Battle of Badr were put to death and when a general amnesty, was proclaimed after the conquest of Makka four out of seventeen persons were executed. (See Ibn Hisham, vol. 1, p. 644 and vol. 2, pp. 409 ff. - Ed.) These acts were based on the permission to put to the sword those who have been conspicuously ruthless in their hostility to Islam and the Muslims.

اَلشَّهۡرُ الۡحَرَامُ بِالشَّهۡرِ الۡحَرَامِ وَالۡحُرُمٰتُ قِصَاصٌ فَمَنِ اعۡتَدٰى عَلَيۡكُمۡ فَاعۡتَدُوۡا عَلَيۡهِ بِمِثۡلِ مَا اعۡتَدٰى عَلَيۡكُمۡ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاعۡلَمُوۡۤا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الۡمُتَّقِيۡنَ ﴿۱۹۴﴾

(2-194) The sacred month for the sacred month; sanctities should be respected alike (by all concerned). Thus, if

someone has attacked you, attack him just as he attacked you, and fear Allah and remain conscious that Allah is with those who guard against violating the bounds set by Him. (206)

(206) From the time of Abraham three months - Dhu al-Qa'dah, Dhu al-Hijjah and Muharram - were consecrated for Hajj, and the month of Rajab was consecrated for 'Umrah. For the duration of these four months warfare, killing and pillage were prohibited so that people could perform Pilgrimage and return home safely. For this reason these months were called the 'sacred months'.

The purpose of the verse is to stress that if the unbelievers respect the sanctity of the sacred months, the Muslims should do the same. If, however, they violate this sanctity and subject the Muslims to aggression, then the Muslims are also entitled to retribution even during the 'sacred months'.

The permission mentioned here was called forth by the introduction of nasi', a practice which had been introduced by the Arabs in order to have an advantage over others in their battles and raids. The manner in which the Arabs used nasi' was such that whenever they wished either to start a conflict in order to satisfy their vendetta or to loot and plunder they carried out their raid in one of the sacred months and then later on tried to compensate for this violation by treating one of the non-sacred months as a sacred month. The Muslims were, therefore, concerned as to what they should do in case the unbelievers resorted to this artifice and surprised them by an attack in one of the recognized sacred months. The verse refers to this problem.

وَ اَ نۡفِقُ ا فِۡ سَبِیۡلِ اللّٰہِ وَلَا تُلۡقُ ا بِاَیۡدِیۡکُمۡ اِلَی التَّہۡلُکَۃِ وَاَحۡسِنُ ۡوَ ۡ اِنَّ اللّٰہَ یُحِبُّ الۡمُحۡسِنِیۡنَ ﴿۱۹۵﴾

(2-195) Spend in the Way of Allah and do not cast yourselves into destruction with your own hands; (207) do good, for Allah loves those who do good. (208)

(207) 'To spend in the way of Allah' signifies financial sacrifice in order to establish God's religion. Not to make any financial sacrifice but to be inclined, instead, to hold personal interests dear to one's heart will lead to one's ruin both in this world and in the Next. Allah will set the unbelievers to dominate over you in this world and condemn you in the Next world.

(208) The root of the word ihsan is HSN, which means doing something in a goodly manner.

One standard of conduct is merely to perform the task entrusted to one. The other and higher standard is to perform that task in a wholesome manner, to devote all one's capacities and resources to its fulfilment, to do one's duty with all one's heart. The first standard is that of ordinary obedience for which it is enough that a man should fear God. The other and higher standard is that of ihsan (moral and spiritual excellence) for which it is necessary that one should have a strong love for God and a profound attachment to Him.

وَاَتِمُّوا الْحَجَّ وَالْعُمْرَةَ لِلّٰهِ ؕ فَاِنْ اُحْصِرْتُمْ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ ۚ وَلَا تَحْلِقُوْا رُءُوْسَكُمْ حَتّٰى يَبْلُغَ الْهَدْيُ مَحِلَّهٗ ؕ فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَّرِيْضًا اَوْ بِهٖۤ اَذًى مِّنْ رَّاْسِهٖ فَفِدْيَةٌ مِّنْ صِيَامٍ اَوْ صَدَقَةٍ اَوْ نُسُكٍ ۚ فَاِذَاۤ اَمِنْتُمْ ۪ فَمَنْ تَمَتَّعَ بِالْعُمْرَةِ اِلَى الْحَجِّ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ ۚ فَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ ثَلٰثَةِ اَيَّامٍ فِى الْحَجِّ وَسَبْعَةٍ اِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ ؕ تِلْكَ عَشَرَةٌ كَامِلَةٌ ؕ ذٰلِكَ لِمَنْ لَّمْ يَكُنْ اَهْلُهٗ حَاضِرِى الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ؕ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿۱۹۶﴾

(2-196) Complete Hajj and 'Umrah for Allah. And if you are prevented from doing so, then make the offering which is available to you, (209) and do not shave your heads until the offering reaches its appointed place. (210)

If any of you should have to shave your head before that because of illness, or injury to the head, then you should make redemption by fasting, or almsgiving, or ritual sacrifice. (211) And when you are secure, (212) then he who avails of 'Umrah before the time of Hajj shall give the offering he can afford; and if he cannot afford the offering, he shall fast for three days during Hajj and for seven days after he returns home; that is, ten days in all. This privilege is for those whose families do not live near the Holy

Mosque. (213) Guard against violating these ordinances of Allah and be mindful that Allah is severe in chastisement.

(209) If any obstruction prevents a person from proceeding with the Pilgrimage and he is forced to stay behind, he should make a sacrificial offering to God of whatever is available - for example, either a camel, a cow, a goat or a sheep

(210) The statement: 'until the offering reaches its appointed place' has been variously interpreted by the jurists. The Hanafi jurists consider this to signify the area which lies within the boundaries of the Haram. In their view this injunction means that if a man has been prevented from Pilgrimage he ought to send to the Haram either the animal itself or the money to purchase it, and have a sacrificial offering made on his behalf. According to Malik and al-Shafi'i this verse enjoins one to perform a sacrifice at the very spot where one is prevented from going any further. (See also Qurtubi's commentary on the verse - Ed.) The injunction regarding 'shaving the head' means that one may not have one's hair cut until a sacrificial offering has been made.

(211) According to the Hadith, in such a situation the Prophet (peace be on him) ordered three days of fasting, or the feeding of six poor people, or the slaughter of one sheep or goat. (See Bukhari, 'Maghazi', 35; Muslim, 'Hajj', 83 - Ed.)

(212) This refers to the change in the situation when the obstacle to proceeding with the Pilgrimage has been removed. Since, in those days, the circumstances which most commonly prevented people from proceeding with their Pilgrimage was the danger of armed attack from tribes hostile to Islam, the removal of that circumstance is described by the words: 'when you are secure'. 'To become secure' refers not only to the removal of the danger of armed attack but to the removal of all such dangers.

(213) In pre-Islamic Arabia it was considered a serious sin to perform Hajj and 'Umrah in one and the same journey. According to the self-made law of the pre-Islamic Arabs, each of these

Pilgrimages required a separate journey. God declared this law void for those coming from abroad and who were granted the privilege of performing both types of pilgrimage in the same journey. This privilege, however, was not extended to those living in the environs of Makka, within the miqat, since it is not difficult for them to proceed separately for the major and minor Pilgrimages.

'Then you who take advantage of 'Umrah before the time of Hajj' means that a person may perform 'Umrah (minor Pilgrimage) and then may interrupt the state of consecration (ihram) and free himself of the prohibitions and limitations incumbent upon him in that state. Later, when the time for the Hajj (major Pilgrimage) arrives, he should once again assume the state of consecration (ihram).

اَلْحَجُّ اَشْهُرٌ مَّعْلُوْمٰتٌ ۚ فَمَنْ فَرَضَ فِيْهِنَّ الْحَجَّ فَلَا رَفَثَ وَلَا فُسُوْقَ وَلَا جِدَالَ فِى الْحَجِّ ۗ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوْا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يَّعْلَمْهُ اللّٰهُ ۗ وَتَزَوَّدُوْا فَاِنَّ خَيْرَ الزَّادِ التَّقْوٰى ۚ وَاتَّقُوْنِ يٰٓاُولِى الْاَلْبَابِ ﴿١٩٧﴾

(2-197) The months of Hajj are well known. Whoever intends to perform Pilgrimage in these months shall abstain from sensual indulgence, (214) wicked conduct (215) and quarrelling; (216) and whatever good you do, Allah knows it. Take your provisions for the Pilgrimage; but, in truth, the best provision is piety. Men of understanding, beware of disobeying Me. (217)

(214) In the state of consecration (ihram) the husband and wife are required to refrain not only from sexual intercourse but also from lascivious conversation (and, for that matter, from any act which either stems from or is likely to stimulate sexual desire - Ed).

(215) Even though all sinful acts are evil, the sinfulness of such acts is aggravated when they are committed in the state of consecration (ihram).

(216) In this state it is not even permitted to rebuke one's servant.

(217) In the pre-Islamic Age of Ignorance it was considered an act of gross worldliness for anyone to carry provisions while on the Pilgrimage. A pious man was expected to go to the House of God without any worldly goods. This misconception is removed here and it is pointed out that abstention from carrying provisions is not necessarily an act of righteousness. True righteousness lies in the fear of God, in abstaining from violating His commands, and in leading a pure and decent life. If a pilgrim's conduct is not good and he resorts to wickedness the mere fact of not carrying provisions, thus parading his detachment from worldly goods, will do him no good. For his wickedness he will suffer humiliation both in the sight of God and man, and his action will be a desecration of the religious duty for which he undertook the journey. On the other hand, if a person's heart is full of the fear of God, and his moral conduct is good, he will be exalted by God and will be held in high esteem by human beings on his return from the Pilgrimage, regardless of the amount of provisions he carried.

لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ اَنْ تَبْتَغُوْا فَضْلًا مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ ۭ فَاِذَآ اَفَضْتُمْ مِّنْ عَرَفٰتٍ فَاذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ عِنْدَ الْمَشْعَرِ الْحَرَامِ ۠ وَاذْكُرُوْهُ كَمَا ھَدٰىكُمْ ۚ وَاِنْ كُنْتُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلِهٖ لَمِنَ الضَّاۗلِّيْنَ ۝١٩٨

(2-198) It is no offence for you to seek the bounty of your Lord during Pilgrimage. (218) When you hasten back from [Arafat then remember Allah at al- Mash[ar al-Haram (i.e. al-Muzdalifah), and remember Him in the manner He has directed you, for before this you were surely in error. (219)

(218) This was another misconception entertained by the pre-Islamic Arabs. They considered it objectionable to do anything relating to one's livelihood during the Pilgrimage. In their view earning one's living was an act of pure worldliness and hence it was bad to indulge in it while engaged in the performance of a religious duty. The Quran refutes this and expounds the view that

if a person strives to earn his living while observing fully the laws of God his action is tantamount to seeking God's grace and bounty. (See 62- 10 - Ed.)It is no sin if a man sets out to seek God's good pleasure and during the same journey tries to combine that purpose with the quest for permissible worldly benefits.

(219) The Muslims were asked to give up all those polytheistic and pagan practices that had arisen among the Arabs during the Age of Ignorance and which ran alongside the worship of God thereby adulterating the latter. They were required to consecrate their worship and adoration to God alone according to the guidance He had now revealed through the Prophet.

ثُمَّ اَفِيۡضُوۡا مِنۡ حَيۡثُ اَفَاضَ النَّاسُ وَاسۡتَغۡفِرُوا اللّٰهَ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوۡرٌ رَّحِيۡمٌ ﴿۱۹۹﴾

(2-199) Then press on even as others press on and implore Allah’s forgiveness; (220) Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.

(220) Since the time of Abraham and Ishmael the recognized practice of the Arabs with regard to Hajj was that on the 9th, Dhu al-Hijjah, they went from Mina to 'Arafat, returning on the morning of the 10th to stay at Muzdalifah. Later, as the priestly monopoly of the Quraysh became well established, they claimed that it was below their dignity to go to 'Arafat with the ordinary people of Arabia. As a mark of what they called their distinction, they went to Muzdalifah only (without going to 'Arafat) and returned from there, leaving it to the commoners to go to 'Arafat. Subsequently Banu Khuza'ah, Banu Kananah and those tribes which were linked by marriage with the Quraysh acquired the same privilege. Eventually, the status of the tribes allied to the Quraysh came to be considered higher than that of the ordinary Arabs, and these tribes too abandoned the practice of going to 'Arafat.

It is this pride and vainglory which the present verse seeks

to undermine. It is addressed to the Quraysh and the tribes associated with them either through marriage or alliance, and to all those who might be inclined to claim for themselves special privileges and distinctions in the future. Such people are asked to go to the place to which all others go, to stay with them, to return with them and to seek pardon from God for the fact that they violated the way of Abraham.

فَاِذَا قَضَيۡتُمۡ مَّنَاسِكَكُمۡ فَاذۡكُرُوا اللّٰهَ كَذِكۡرِكُمۡ اٰبَآءَكُمۡ اَوۡ اَشَدَّ ذِكۡرًا ؕ فَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنۡ يَّقُوۡلُ رَبَّنَاۤ اٰتِنَا فِى الدُّنۡيَا وَمَا لَهٗ فِى الۡاٰخِرَةِ مِنۡ خَلَاقٍ ۲۰۰

(2-200) And when you have performed your rites remember Allah as you remember your fathers; or remember Him even more. [221] There are some (among those that remember Allah) who say: “Our Lord, grant us what is good in this world;” such shall have no share in the Hereafter.

(221) After the Hajj the Arabs used to hold rallies at Mind. At these rallies people from different tribes proudly narrated the achievements of their forefathers and indulged in much extravagant self-praise. Here they are asked to renounce all such things and devote the time which they formerly spent on trivialities to remembering and celebrating God.

Dhikr refers to the remembrance of God at Mina.

وَمِنۡهُمۡ مَّنۡ يَّقُوۡلُ رَبَّنَاۤ اٰتِنَا فِى الدُّنۡيَا حَسَنَةً وَّ فِى الۡاٰخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَّقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ۲۰۱

(2-201) There are others who say: “Our Lord, grant us what is good in this world and what is good in the World to Come, and protect us from the chastisement of the Fire.”

اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمۡ نَصِيۡبٌ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوۡا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ سَرِيۡعُ الۡحِسَابِ ۲۰۲

(2-202) They shall have a portion from what they earned; Allah is quick in reckoning.

وَاذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ فِيْٓ اَيَّامٍ مَّعْدُوْدٰتٍ فَمَنْ تَعَجَّلَ فِيْ يَوْمَيْنِ فَلَآ اِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ وَمَنْ تَاَخَّرَ فَلَآ اِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ لِمَنِ اتَّقٰى وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّكُمْ اِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُوْنَ ٢٠٣

(2-203) And remember Allah through the appointed days. It is no sin for him who hastens off and returns in two days, and it is no sin for him who delays the return [222] provided he has spent the days in piety. Beware of disobeying Allah and know well that to Him you all shall be mustered.

(222) Whether a person returned on the 12th or on the 13th of Dhu al-Hijjah from Mina to Makka during the day of tashriq (i.e. from the 10th to 13th of Dhu al-Hijjah) was immaterial. What was of real importance was not the number of days spent at Mina but the intensity of one's devotion to God during the period of one's stay.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُّعْجِبُكَ قَوْلُهٗ فِى الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيُشْهِدُ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى مَا فِيْ قَلْبِهٖ وَهُوَ اَلَدُّ الْخِصَامِ ٢٠٤

(2-204) Among people there is a kind whose sayings on the affairs of the world fascinate you: he calls Allah again and again to bear testimony to his sincerity; [223] yet he is most fierce in enmity. [224]

(223) Such a person tends to claim again and again that he was merely a well-wisher and was simply striving to uphold what is true and right, and to promote the welfare of the people rather than doing things for the sake of personal aggrandizement.

(224) The words aladd al-khisam mean 'the most fierce in enmity'. This would apply to someone who concentrates all his energies on opposing truth, and who resorts to whatever falsehood, dishonesty, treachery and breach of faith he thinks necessary to achieve his ends.

وَ اِذَا تَوَلّٰی سَعٰی فِی ا لۡاَرۡضِ لِیُفۡسِدَ فِیۡا وَ یُہۡلِکَ الۡحَرۡثَ وَالنَّسۡلَ ؕ وَ اللّٰہُ لَا یُحِبُّ الۡفَسَادَ ﴿۲۰۵﴾

(2-205) Whenever he attains authority, [225] he goes about the earth spreading mischief and laying to waste crops and human life, even though Allah (whose testimony he invokes) does not love mischief.

(225) The expression idha tawalla can be translated in two ways. First, in the manner of our translation of the text. It can also be translated to make the verse mean that when such people return from sweet and apparently genuine talk, they engage in arrogant and destructive action.

وَ اِذَا قِیۡلَ لَہُ اتَّقِ اللّٰہَ اَخَذَتۡہُ الۡعِزَّۃُ بِالۡاِثۡمِ فَحَسۡبُہٗ جَہَنَّمُ ؕ وَلَبِئۡسَ الۡمِہَادُ ﴿۲۰۶﴾

(2-206) Whenever he is told: “Fear Allah,” his vainglory seizes him in his sin. So Hell shall suffice for him; what a wretched resting place!

وَ مِنَ النَّاسِ مَنۡ یَّشۡرِیۡ نَفۡسَہُ ابۡتِغَآءَ مَرۡضَاتِ اللّٰہِ ؕ وَاللّٰہُ رَءُوۡفٌۢ بِالۡعِبَادِ ﴿۲۰۷﴾

(2-207) On the other hand, among men there is a kind who dedicates his life seeking to please Allah; Allah is Immensely Kind to such devoted servants.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا ادْخُلُوْا فِى السِّلْمِ كَآفَّةً ۪ وَّ لَا تَتَّبِعُوْا خُطُوٰتِ الشَّيْطٰنِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿۲۰۸﴾

(2-208) Believers! Enter wholly into Islam [226] and do not follow in the footsteps of Satan for he is your open enemy.

(226) God demands that man should submit, without reservation, the whole of his being to His will. Man's outlook, intellectual pursuits, behavior, interaction with other people and modes of endeavor should all be completely subordinate to Islam. God does not accept the splitting up of human life into separate compartments, some governed by the teachings of Islam and others exempt.

فَاِنْ زَلَلْتُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَتْكُمُ الْبَيِّنٰتُ فَاعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿۲۰۹﴾

(2-209) And if you stumble in spite of the clear instructions which have come to you, then know well that Allah is Most Mighty, Most Wise. [227]

(227) The point is that God has enormous power and knows well how to punish criminals.

هَلْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَّاۤ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَهُمُ اللّٰهُ فِىْ ظُلَلٍ مِّنَ الْغَمَامِ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ وَقُضِىَ الْاَمْرُ ؕ وَاِلَى اللّٰهِ تُرْجَعُ الْاُمُوْرُ ﴿۲۱۰﴾

(2-210) Are those people (who are not following the Right Path in spite of admonition and instruction) waiting for Allah to come to them in canopies of clouds with a retinue of angels and settle the matter finally? [228] To Allah shall all matters ultimately be referred.

(228) These words are indicative of an important fact. Man's test lies in showing whether he accepts reality even though he cannot perceive it directly through his senses; and whether, after having accepted it, he has the required moral stamina to obey God even though he is endowed with the capacity to disobey Him. In sending the Prophets, in revealing the Scriptures, indeed, even in performing miracles, God has always taken care to leave scope for testing man's power of judgement and his moral stamina. He has never disclosed reality to such a degree that man would be inevitably compelled to accept it. For if that were done, nothing would remain to be tested and the very idea of man's success or failure would be meaningless.

It is pointed out, therefore, that people should not keep waiting for God and the angels - the devoted servants of His realm - to appear before them. If that were to happen, it would mark the end of everything and there would be no occasion left for man to decide anything. To believe and to bow in submission and obedience to God are of value only so long as the reality is presented in such a way as to make its rejection possible.

For, if the Truth were to be fully disclosed and if men were to see with their own eyes God on His Throne of Majesty with the entire universe acting according to His command, what would be the worth of their faith and obedience? If all these things were physically observable not even the most stubborn unbelievers and the worst sinners would dare either to disbelieve or disobey. Acceptance of faith and obedience has value only as long as there remains a veil over reality. The moment when reality is totally unveiled would mark the end of the period granted to man to decide, and of the testing period for him. It would, in fact, be the Day of Judgement.

سَلۡ بَنِیۡۤ اِسۡرَآءِیۡلَ کَمۡ اٰتَیۡنٰہُمۡ مِّنۡ اٰیَۃٍۭ بَیِّنَۃٍ ؕ وَ مَنۡ یُّبَدِّلۡ نِعۡمَۃَ اللّٰہِ مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِ مَا جَآءَتۡہُ فَاِنَّ اللّٰہَ شَدِیۡدُ الۡعِقَابِ ﴿۲۱۱﴾

(2-211) Ask the Children of Israel how many Clear Signs We gave them! And when a people tamper with Allah’s bounty after it has been bestowed on them – then indeed Allah is severe in punishment. (229)

(229) There are two reasons why this query is addressed to the Children of Israel. In the first place, a group of living human beings provide a better source of instruction and admonition than mute archaeological findings. In the second place, the Israelites were a people who, having been endowed with Scripture and prophethood, were entrusted with the leadership of the world. By falling prey to worldliness, hypocrisy and other errors of belief and conduct they subsequently lost God's favour. A people entrusted with the task of universal leadership could derive no better lesson from another people than this one.

زُيِّنَ لِلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا وَ يَسْخَرُوْنَ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا ۘ وَالَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿۲۱۲﴾

(2-212) Worldly life has been made attractive to those who have denied the Truth. Such men deride the men of faith, but the pious shall rank higher than them on the Day of Resurrection. As for worldly livelihood, Allah grants it to whomsoever He wills without measure.

كَانَ النَّاسُ اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً ۟ فَبَعَثَ اللّٰهُ النَّبِيّٖنَ مُبَشِّرِيْنَ وَمُنْذِرِيْنَ ۪ وَ اَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِيْمَا اخْتَلَفُوْا فِيْهِ ؕ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ فِيْهِ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوْهُ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَتْهُمُ الْبَيِّنٰتُ بَغْيًۢا بَيْنَهُمْ ۚ فَهَدَى اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لِمَا اخْتَلَفُوْا فِيْهِ مِنَ الْحَقِّ بِاِذْنِهٖ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَهْدِيْ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿۲۱۳﴾

(2-213) In the beginning mankind followed one single way. (Later on this state ended and differences arose.) Then Allah sent forth Prophets as heralds of good tidings for the righteous and as warners against the consequences of evil-doing.

He sent down with them the Book embodying the Truth so that it might judge among people in their disputes. And those who innovated divergent ways rather than follow the Truth were none other than those who had received the knowledge of the Truth and clear guidance; and they did so to commit excesses against each other. (230) So by His leave Allah directed the believers to the Right Way in matters on which they disagreed. Allah guides whomsoever He wills onto a Straight Way.

(230) When ignorant people attempt to trace the history of 'religion' they tend to the view that man began his life in the darkness of polytheism and that in the course of time, corresponding to man's progress, this darkness gradually receded and light increased till man arrived at monotheism.

The Quranic version, however, proclaims that man began his life in full light of the Truth. God revealed this Truth to the very first man He created, one to whom He intimated the right way of life for man. Thereafter the human race remained on the Right Way for some time and lived as one community. Later, however, people invented deviating ways. This did not happen because Truth had not been communicated to them. The cause was rather that some people willfully sought to acquire privileges, benefits and advantages beyond their legitimate limits, and thus subjected others to injustices. It was in order to enable people to overcome this corruption that God sent His Prophets. These Prophets were not sent to found separate religions in their own names and bring new religious communities into existence. Rather the purpose of the Prophets was to illuminate before people the Truth which they had allowed to be lost, and once again make them into one community.

اَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ اَنْ تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَ لَمَّا يَاْتِكُمْ مَّثَلُ الَّذِيْنَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ ؕ مَسَّتْهُمُ الْبَاْسَآءُ وَالضَّرَّآءُ وَ زُلْزِلُوْا حَتّٰى يَقُوْلَ الرَّسُوْلُ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَعَهٗ مَتٰى نَصْرُ اللّٰهِ ؕ اَلَاۤ اِنَّ نَصْرَ اللّٰهِ قَرِيْبٌ ﴿۲۱۴﴾

(2-214) Do you suppose [231] that you will enter Paradise untouched by the suffering endured by the people of faith who passed away before you? They were afflicted by misery and hardship and were so convulsed that the Messenger and the believers with him cried out: “When will Allah’s help arrive?” They were assured: “Behold, Allah’s help is close by.”

(231) In between this verse and the one above comes a whole story which has been left untold, a story which is alluded to in the present verse and which is mentioned in some detail in the Makkan surahs of the Quran (these were revealed earlier than the present surah). The point emphasized here is that whenever the Prophets came into the world they, and their followers, were confronted with severe resistance from those in rebellion against God. At grave risk to themselves they strove to establish the hegemony of the true religion over the false ways of life. To follow this religion has, therefore, never been easy; it is not merely a matter of declaring one's faith and then sitting back in ease and comfort. On the contrary, the profession of faith has always demanded that one should strive to establish the religion, which one has adopted as one's faith, as a living reality and that one should spare no effort in undermining the power of the Devil who seeks to resist it.

يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُوْنَ ۗ قُلْ مَآ اَنْفَقْتُمْ مِّنْ خَيْرٍ فَلِلْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْاَقْرَبِيْنَ وَالْيَتٰمٰى
وَالْمَسٰكِيْنِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيْلِ ۗ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوْا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِهٖ عَلِيْمٌ ٢١٥

(2-215) People ask you what they should spend. Say: “Whatever wealth you spend let it be for your parents and kinsmen, the orphans, the needy and the wayfarer; Allah is aware of whatever good you do.”

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ وَهُوَ كُرْهٌ لَّكُمْ ۚ وَعَسٰٓى اَنْ تَكْرَهُوْا شَيْـًٔا وَّهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ۚ وَعَسٰٓى اَنْ تُحِبُّوْا
شَيْـًٔا وَّهُوَ شَرٌّ لَّكُمْ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ وَاَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ٢١٦

(2-216) Fighting is ordained upon you and it is disliked by you; it may well be that you dislike a thing even though it is good for you, and it may well be that you like a thing even though it is bad for you. Allah knows and you do not know.

يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ عَنِ الشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ قِتَالٍ فِيْهِ قُلْ قِتَالٌ فِيْهِ كَبِيْرٌ وَصَدٌّ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَكُفْرٌ بِهٖ وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ۗ وَاِخْرَاجُ اَهْلِهٖ مِنْهُ اَكْبَرُ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَالْفِتْنَةُ اَكْبَرُ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ ۗ وَلَا يَزَالُوْنَ يُقٰتِلُوْنَكُمْ حَتّٰى يَرُدُّوْكُمْ عَنْ دِيْنِكُمْ اِنِ اسْتَطَاعُوْا ۗ وَمَنْ يَّرْتَدِدْ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِيْنِهٖ فَيَمُتْ وَهُوَ كَافِرٌ فَاُولٰۤئِكَ حَبِطَتْ اَعْمَالُهُمْ فِى الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ وَاُولٰۤئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿٢١٧﴾

(2-217) People ask you about fighting in the holy month. Say: “Fighting in it is an awesome sin, but barring people from the Way of Allah, disbelieving in Him, and denying entry into the Holy Mosque and expelling its inmates from it [232] are more awesome acts in the sight of Allah; and persecution is even more heinous than killing.” They will not cease fighting against you till they turn you from your religion if they can. [233] (So remember well) that whoever from amongst you turns away from his religion and dies in the state of unbelief their work will go to waste in this world and in the Next. They are destined for the Fire and it is there that they will abide.

(232) This relates to a certain incident. In Rajab 2 A. H. the Prophet sent an expedition of eight persons to Nakhlah (which lies between Makka and Ta'if). He directed them to follow the movements of the Quraysh and gather information about their plans, but not to engage in fighting. On their way they came across a trade caravan belonging to the Quraysh and ambushed it. They killed one person and captured the rest along with their belongings and took them to Madinah. They did this at a time when the month of Rajah was approaching its end and Sha'ban was about to begin. It was, therefore, doubtful whether the attack was actually carried out in one of the sacred months, that is, Rajab, or not. But the Quraysh, and the Jews who were secretly in league with them, as well as the hypocrites made great play of this and used it as a weapon in their propaganda campaign

against the Muslims. (For this expedition see Ibn Hisham, Sirah. vol. 1, pp. 601 ff; Ibn Ishaq, Life of Muhammad, tr. A. Guillaume. pp. 286 ff.) They pointed out the contradiction between the claims of the Muslims to true religion on the one hand, and they're not hesitating to shed blood in a sacred month on the other.

This verse aims to answer these objections. The essence of what is said here is that fighting during the sacred months is without doubt an evil act. It points out that those people who had continually subjected their kith and kin to untold wrong for thirteen years merely because they believed in the One God were not competent to make such an objection. Not only had the Muslims been driven from their homes, they had had the way to the Holy Mosque closed to them, a bar which had not been imposed by anyone during the course of some two thousand years. With this record of mischief and misconduct it was not for them to raise such an outcry at a minor ambush, and especially so when the incident had taken place without the approval of the Prophet. The whole incident was in fact no more than an irresponsible act on the part of some members of the Islamic community.

It should be remembered that when on their return those people went, with captives and booty, to visit the Prophet, he expressly pointed out to them that he had not permitted them to fight. Not only that, he declined to receive the public exchequer's share of their booty, which indicated that their booty was considered unlawful. The Muslims, in general, also severely reproached the people responsible for the incident, and in fact nobody in Madinah applauded what they had done.

(233) A few simple-hearted Muslims, whose minds were seized by a mistaken concept of righteousness and pacifism, were influenced by the above objections which had been raised by the polytheists of Makka and the Jews. In this verse the believers are being asked not to entertain the hope that they might clear the

air and promote understanding and goodwill by adopting an over-lenient stance towards their opponents. The objections of the latter were not motivated by the desire to find out the Truth; their true purpose was nothing but vilification. What particularly irked the adversaries of the Muslims was that they believed in a religion of their own and were inviting the whole world to accept it. Hence, as long as the Muslims continued to believe in Islam and as long as their opponents remained stubborn in their disbelief, the existing chasm between the two groups was bound to remain.

Moreover, the enemies whom they confronted were not to be considered ordinary enemies. Those who wanted to deprive a person of his belongings or land were in fact enemies of a relatively much less dangerous kind than those who sought to turn him away from his faith; while the former sought to harm his worldly interests, the latter were bent upon hurling him into the eternal torment in the Hereafter.

اِنَّ الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَ الَّذِیۡنَ ہَاجَرُوۡا وَ جٰہَدُوۡا فِیۡ سَبِیۡلِ اللّٰہِ ۙ اُولٰٓئِکَ یَرۡجُوۡنَ رَحۡمَتَ اللّٰہِ ؕ وَ اللّٰہُ غَفُوۡرٌ رَّحِیۡمٌ ﴿۲۱۸﴾

(2-218) (On the contrary) those who believed, and forsook their hearth and home and strove [234] in the Way of Allah, such may rightly hope for the mercy of Allah: for Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Merciful.

(234) Jihad denotes doing one's utmost to achieve something. It is not the equivalent of war, for which the Arabic word is qital. Jihad has a wider connotation and embraces every kind of striving in God's cause. A mujahid is a person who is single-mindedly devoted to his cause, who uses his mental capacity to reflect how best he can achieve it, propagates it by word of mouth and by the pen, uses his physical energy in striving to serve it, spends all the resources at his disposal to promote it, employs all the force he commands in confronting any power which might stand in its way, and, whenever necessary, does not shirk risking his very life for it. All this is Jihad. ' Jihad in the way of God' is that strife in which man engages exclusively to win God's good pleasure, to establish the supremacy of His religion and to make His word prevail.

يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ قُلْ فِيْهِمَآ اِثْمٌ كَبِيْرٌ وَّ مَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ وَ اِثْمُهُمَآ اَكْبَرُ مِنْ نَّفْعِهِمَا ؕ وَ يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُوْنَ ۬ قُلِ الْعَفْوَ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمُ الْاٰيٰتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ ۙ﴿۲۱۹﴾

(2-219) They ask you about wine and games of chance. Say: “In both these there is great evil, even though there is some benefit for people, but their evil is greater than their benefit.” (235)

(235) They ask: “What should we spend in the Way of Allah?” Say: “Whatever you can spare.” In this way Allah clearly expounds His injunctions to you that you may reflect upon them, 235. This is the first injunction concerning intoxicating drinks and gambling, and here the matter has been left merely as an expression of disapproval. This was a preliminary step designed to prepare the minds of people for the acceptance of their prohibition. The injunction prohibiting the performance of Prayer when in a state of intoxication came later, and ultimately alcohol, gambling and the like were categorically prohibited see (4: 43) and (5: 90).

فِى الدُّنْيَا وَ الْاٰخِرَةِ ؕ وَ يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ عَنِ الْيَتٰمٰى ؕ قُلْ اِصْلَاحٌ لَّهُمْ خَيْرٌ ؕ وَ اِنْ تُخَالِطُوْهُمْ فَاِخْوَانُكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ الْمُفْسِدَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِ ؕ وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَاَعْنَتَكُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿۲۲۰﴾

(2-220) both in regard to this world and the Next. They question you concerning orphans. Say: “To deal with them in the way which is to their good, that is best. (236) And if you intermix (your expenses and living) with them, (there is no harm for) they are your brothers.” Allah knows the mischievous from the righteous, and had Allah willed, He would indeed have imposed on you exacting conditions; but He is All-Powerful, Most Wise.

(236) Before this verse was revealed many severe injunctions had already been revealed regarding the protection of orphans' property. It had been ordained that ' people should not even draw near to the property of the orphan' (6: 152)v; (17: 34) and that 'those who wrongfully eat the properties of orphans only, fill their bellies with fire' (4: 10). Because of these severe injunctions the orphans' guardians were so over awed that they even separated the food and drink of the orphans from their own; they felt anxious lest anything belonging to the orphans became mixed with their own. It is for this reason that they enquired of the Prophet (peace he on him) what the proper form of their dealings with orphans should be.

وَ لَا تَنۡكِحُوا الۡمُشۡرِكٰتِ حَتّٰی یُؤۡمِنَّ ؕ وَلَاَمَةٌ مُّؤۡمِنَةٌ خَیۡرٌ مِّنۡ مُّشۡرِكَةٍ وَّ لَوۡ اَعۡجَبَتۡكُمۡ ۚ وَ لَا تُنۡكِحُوا الۡمُشۡرِكِیۡنَ حَتّٰی یُؤۡمِنُوۡا ؕ وَلَعَبۡدٌ مُّؤۡمِنٌ خَیۡرٌ مِّنۡ مُّشۡرِكٍ وَّ لَوۡ اَعۡجَبَكُمۡ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ یَدۡعُوۡنَ اِلَی النَّارِ ۚ وَاللّٰہُ یَدۡعُوۡۤا اِلَی الۡجَنَّةِ وَالۡمَغۡفِرَةِ بِاِذۡنِہٖ ۚ وَیُبَیِّنُ اٰیٰتِہٖ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّہُمۡ یَتَذَكَّرُوۡنَ ﴿۲۲۱﴾

(2-221) Marry not the women who associate others with Allah in His Divinity until they believe; for a believing slave-girl is better than a (free, respectable) woman who associates others with Allah in His Divinity, even though she might please you. Likewise, do not give your women in marriage to men who associate others with Allah in His Divinity until they believe; for a believing slave is better than a (free, respectable) man who associates others with Allah in His Divinity, even though he might please you. Such people call you towards the Fire, (237) and Allah calls you, by His leave, towards Paradise and forgiveness; and He makes His injunctions clear to people so that they may take heed.

(237) This is the reason for, and the wisdom underlying the injunction mentioned above prohibiting marriage links with polytheists. Marriage does not consist merely of sexual relations between a man and a woman. It is a relationship which has deep social, moral and emotional implications. If established between a believer and a polytheist, this kind of relationship has many

possible outcomes. On the one hand, it is possible that because of the influence of the believing spouse, the other partner, the family and the future generations may become receptive to Islamic beliefs and to the Islamic way of life. On the other hand, it is also possible that the spouse who is a polytheist may influence the thinking and mode of living of the believing spouse, the family and the future generations. Moreover this relationship may promote in that family a hotchpotch of Islam, downright atheism, and polytheism which, however welcome to non-Muslims, is in no way acceptable to Islam. No true believer can run the risk that either the ideas and life-styles which are organically related to atheism and polytheism may flourish among the members of his family, or that some aspect of his own life may bear the impress of atheism or polytheism.

وَ يَسْـَٔلُوْ نَكَ عَنِ الْمَحِيْضِ ؕ قُلْ هُوَ اَذًى ۙ فَاعْتَزِلُوا النِّسَآءَ فِى الْمَحِيْضِ ۙ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوْهُنَّ حَتّٰى يَطْهُرْنَ ۚ فَاِذَا تَطَهَّرْنَ فَاْتُوْهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ اَمَرَكُمُ اللّٰهُ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِيْنَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِيْنَ ﴿۲۲۲﴾

(2-222) They ask you about menstruation. Say: “It is a state of impurity; so keep away from women in the state of menstruation, (238) and do not approach them until they are cleansed. And when they are cleansed, (239) then come to them as Allah has commanded you.” (240) Truly, Allah loves those who abstain from evil and keep themselves pure.

(238) The Arabic word adha denotes both a state of ritual impurity and sickness. Menstruation is not merely an impurity, but also a state in which the woman is closer to sickness than to health.

(239) With regard to matters such as these the Quran resorts to metaphors and figurative language. Hence it instructs men not to approach women. This does not mean that people should either abstain from sitting together on the same floor or eating together when a woman has her monthly period making her virtually an untouchable, as has been the custom among the Jews, Hindus

and certain other nations. The explanation of this injunction by the Prophet makes it clear that during this period men are only required to abstain from sexual intercourse; no change is postulated in other relationships, and the woman is to be treated in the normal way. (See, for instance, Bukhari, 'Hayd', 10, 'Itikaf', 2-4, 10, 19; Muslim, 'Hayd', 6-13; Abu Da'ud, 'Taharah', 102, 106 - Ed.)

(240) The 'command' of God mentioned here is not a formal legal injunction from God, but that inherent urge with which the nature of both men and animals has been imbued and which is apprehended instinctively.

(The verse means, therefore, that after the end of the menstrual course people may again engage in sexual intercourse - Ed.)

نِسَآؤُكُمْ حَرْثٌ لَّكُمْ ۠ فَاْتُوْا حَرْثَكُمْ اَنّٰى شِئْتُمْ ۪ وَقَدِّمُوْا لِاَنْفُسِكُمْ ۭ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّكُمْ مُّلٰقُوْهُ ۭ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۲۲۳

(2-223) Your wives are your tilth; go, then, into your tilth as you wish (241) but take heed of your ultimate future (242) and avoid incurring the wrath of Allah. Know well that one Day you shall face Him. Announce good tidings to the believers.

(241) That is, God's purpose in the creation of women is not merely to provide men with recreation. Their mutual relationship is like that between a farmer and his tilth. A farmer approaches his field not just for the sake of pleasure, but to acquire produce. Similarly, man ought to approach the tilth of the human race with the purpose of acquiring produce, that is, offspring. What is of concern to the Law of God is not the particular mode of cultivating one's tilth, but rather that one should go only to one's tilth and not elsewhere, and that one should go there for the purpose of cultivation.

(242) These words are susceptible to two meanings. First, that a person should try to maintain the continuity of the human race so that when he departs from this world there should be others to replace him in his tasks. Second, that one should be concerned with the quality of the coming generation, i.e., how far it is endowed with religious devotion, moral excellence and humanity, and that one should do all that is possible to promote these qualities. The latter part of the verse contains the warning that those who deliberately neglect these two duties will be severely taken to task by God.

وَ لَا تَجْعَلُوا اللّٰ عُرْضَۃً لِّاَ ۡ مٰنِکُمْ اَ تَبَرُّ ا وَتَتَّقُ ا وَتُصْلِحُوا۟ وَنَ النَّاسِ وَاللّٰ سَمِیۡعٌ عَلِیۡمٌ ﴿۲۲۴﴾

(2-224) Do not swear by Allah in your oaths if they are intended to hinder you from virtue, piety and promoting the good of mankind.[243] Surely Allah is All-Hearing, All- Knowing.

(243) Authentic Traditions indicate that if a person takes a vow and discovers later that righteousness and common good are best served by breaking that vow then he should do so. Expiation consists in either feeding or providing clothes for ten poor people, or setting free a slave, or fasting for three days (**see 5: 89**).

لَا یُؤَاخِذُکُمُ اللّٰ ۡ بِاللَّغْوِ فِیۡۤ اَ مٰنِکُمْ وَلٰکِنۡ یُّؤَاخِذُکُمۡ بِمَا کَسَبَتۡ قُلُوۡبُکُمْ وَاللّٰ غَفُوۡرٌ حَلِیۡمٌ ﴿۲۲۵﴾

(2-225) Allah will not take you to task for the oaths you utter in vain,[244] but will certainly take you to task for the oaths you utter in earnest. Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Forbearing.

(244) This refers to oaths which one utters either through habit or without any intent and purpose. The breach of such vows neither entails expiation nor makes man liable to God's reproach.

لِلَّذِيْنَ يُؤْلُوْنَ مِنْ نِّسَآئِهِمْ تَرَبُّصُ اَرْبَعَةِ اَشْهُرٍ ۚ فَاِنْ فَآءُوْ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٢٢٦﴾

(2-226) For those who vow abstinence from their wives there is a respite of four months.[245] Then, if they go back on their vow they will find that Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate. [246]

(245) In the legal terminology of Islam this is known as ila'. It is obvious that harmony and cordiality do not always prevail in matrimonial life. There are occasions when strains and tensions develop, leading to discord and estrangement. But the Law of God does not approve of that discord which causes a husband and wife, who are legally tied to one another in matrimony, to remain for all practical purposes alienated from one another as if they had ceased to be spouses. For this kind of abnormal discord and estrangement God has fixed a limit of four months during which the spouses are required either to settle their difference, or to break the tie of wedlock so that each becomes free to contract marriage with someone with whom a harmonious matrimonial relationship appears more likely.

Since the verse mentions 'taking a vow', the Hanafi and Shafii jurists consider the injunction to be applicable only when a husband has taken a vow not to have sexual relations with his wife. According to them, the injunction does not apply if the husband merely forsakes sexual relations with his wife without taking any vow to that effect. The Maliki jurists are, however, of the opinion that irrespective of whether a person has taken a vow, the maximum permissible limit for abstaining from sexual relations in wedlock is four months. A statement to that effect is also attributed to Ahmad b. Hanbal. (See Ibn Rushd, Bidayat al-Mujtahid, vol. 2, pp. 98 ff. - Ed.)

According to 'Ali, Ibn Abbas and Hasan al-Basri, this injunction is related to the cessation of sexual relations as a result

of unpleasantness in the relationship of the spouses. It would not apply, however, if a husband were to decide to abandon sexual relations with his wife out of some beneficial consideration - say because the wife is breastfeeding - at a time when their relationship was pleasant. According to other jurists, however, any vow which prevents sexual intercourse between a husband and wife is ila', and ought not to last longer than four months irrespective of the state of the matrimonial relationship when it was taken. (See Jassas, Ahkam al-Quran, vol. 1, pp. 355 ff - Ed.)

(246) Some jurists have interpreted this verse to signify that if the spouses break their vow and re-establish sexual relations they will not be liable to any expiation and will be pardoned by God gratuitously. However, the majority of jurists are of the opinion that they, are required to expiate. The statement that God is Oft-Forgiving and Merciful does not mean that God has forgiven them. It means rather that God will accept their expiation and will forgive them for whatever excesses they may have committed against each other.

وَ اِنْ عَزَمُوا الطَّلٰقَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰ سَمِیْعٌ عَلِیْمٌ۲۲۷

(2-227) And if they resolve on divorce, (247) surely Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. (248)

(247) According to 'Uthman, Ibn Mas'ud, Zayd ibn Thabit and others the limit for the restoration of matrimonial relations is four months. The mere termination of that period proves that the husband has decided to repudiate the marriage and so divorce automatically ensues. It will be reckoned as an irrevocable (ba'in) repudiation. This means that separation between the spouses will come into force and the husband will not have the right to revoke it during the period of waiting ('iddah). The two parties will, however, have the right to recontract marriage by mutual consent. Statements from 'Umar, 'Ali, Ibn 'Abbas, and also a statement from Ibn 'Umar, have been reported in support of this

doctrine and have been accepted by the Hanafi jurists as the basis of their doctrine.

Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib, Makhul, Zuhri,. and some other early jurists agree with this doctrine to the extent that divorce comes into force after four months. But they consider that the husband may revoke it during the period of waiting; and even after the lapse of that period the spouses may recontract marriage by mutual consent.

However, 'A'ishah, Abu al-Darda' and the majority of the jurists of Madinah are opposed to this opinion and hold that after four months the matter should be placed before the court when the judge will order the husband either to resume matrimonial relations with his wife or divorce her. Statements from 'Umar and 'Ali as well as a statement from Ibn 'Umar have come down in support of this doctrine. This opinion has been accepted by Malik and Shafi'i. (See Jassas, vol. 1, pp. 359 f. - Ed.)

(248) That is, if a man has abandoned his wife on unreasonable grounds, he should not feel secure from the wrath of God for He is not unaware of the excesses that he may have committed.

وَالْمُطَلَّقٰتُ يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِاَنْفُسِهِنَّ ثَلٰثَةَ قُرُوْٓءٍ ۭ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَهُنَّ اَنْ يَّكْتُمْنَ مَا خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ فِيْٓ اَرْحَامِهِنَّ اِنْ كُنَّ يُؤْمِنَّ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ ۭ وَبُعُوْلَتُهُنَّ اَحَقُّ بِرَدِّهِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ اِنْ اَرَادُوْٓا اِصْلَاحًا ۭ وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِيْ عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ ۠ وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ ٢٢٨؀

(2-228) Divorced women shall keep themselves in waiting for three menstrual courses and it is unlawful for them, if they believe in Allah and the Last Day, to hide whatever Allah might have created in their wombs. Should their husbands desire reconciliation during this time they are entitled to take them back into wedlock. (249)

Women have the same rights against their men as men have against them; but men have a degree above them. Allah is All- Powerful, All-Wise.

(249) Jurists disagree about the legal import of this verse. According to some, as long as a woman has not completed her third menstrual period repudiation will not have the effect of irrevocable divorce. This is the view of Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Ali, Ibn 'Abbas, Abu Musa al-Ash'arl, Ibn Mas'ud and several distinguished Companions of the Prophet. This is also the accepted doctrine of the Hanafi jurists. On the other hand, another group of jurists is of the view that, as soon as the third monthly period of a woman begins, the husband ceases to have the right to revoke the divorce. This is the view of , 'A'ishah, Ibn 'Umar and Zayd ibn Thabit, and has been accepted by, the Shafi'i and Maliki jurists. It should be clear, however, that this injunction is applicable only when the husband has pronounced single or double divorce. In case of triple divorce, the husband ceases to have the right of revocation. (See Jassas, vol. 1. pp. 364 ff. - Ed.)

اَلطَّلٰقُ مَرَّتٰنِ فَاِمْسَاكٌ بِمَعْرُوْفٍ اَوْ تَسْرِيْحٌ بِاِحْسٰنٍ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ اَنْ تَاْخُذُوْا مِمَّآ اٰتَيْتُمُوْهُنَّ شَيْـًٔا اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّخَافَآ اَلَّا يُقِيْمَا حُدُوْدَ اللّٰهِ فَاِنْ خِفْتُمْ اَلَّا يُقِيْمَا حُدُوْدَ اللّٰهِ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا فِيْمَا افْتَدَتْ بِهٖ تِلْكَ حُدُوْدُ اللّٰهِ فَلَا تَعْتَدُوْهَا وَمَنْ يَّتَعَدَّ حُدُوْدَ اللّٰهِ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿٢٢٩﴾

(2-229) Divorce can be pronounced twice: then, either honorable retention or kindly release should follow. (250)

(While dissolving the marriage tie) it is unlawful for you to take back anything of what you have given to your wives (251) unless both fear that they may not be able to keep within the bounds set by Allah. Then, if they fear that they might not be able to keep within the bounds set by Allah, there is no blame upon them for what the wife might give away of her property to

become released from the marriage tie. [252] These are the bounds set by Allah; do not transgress them. Those of you who transgress the bounds set by Allah are indeed the wrong-doers.

(250) This little verse aims at the reform of a serious evil that was rampant in the social life in pre-Islamic Arabia. According to the customary law of Arabia, a person was entitled to pronounce any number of divorces upon his wife. As a result divorce was resorted to at the least provocation and annoyance. In addition, the husband often exercised his right to revoke the divorce he had pronounced with the result that the poor wife could neither live with him in happiness nor free herself to contract a fresh marriage with someone else. Here the Quran seeks to shut the door on this injustice. According to this verse, a man may pronounce revocable divorce upon his wife not more than twice. Should he pronounce divorce for the third time after revoking it twice, the wife will be permanently alienated from him.

The appropriate procedure for divorce, according to the Quran and Hadith, is that a person should pronounce one divorce outside the time of the wife's menstrual period. After the first divorce he may pronounce a second in the next clear period if he wants to, though it is preferable that he should confine himself to pronouncing the first. In this case the husband retains the right to revoke the divorce at any time before the lapse of the period of waiting ('iddah) even if the period of waiting has lapsed, the couple have the right to recontract the marriage by mutual consent. If the husband, however, pronounces divorce in his wife's third clear period he has no right to revoke the divorce, and the spouses are not entitled to recontract the marriage. The pronouncing of triple divorce in one session is a highly sinful act according to the Law, and the Prophet has strongly denounced it. (See Nasii, 'Talaq', 6 - Ed.) It has even been established that 'Umar used to flog those who pronounced triple divorce in one session. Although this procedure of divorce is considered sinful, the founders of the four legal schools consider it to have legal effect, with the result that such divorce, in their view, becomes absolutely irrevocable.

(251) This refers to the mahr (bridal gift) and the jewelry, clothes and so on which the husband offers as a gift to his wife, and to which he has no right of reclaim. It is, indeed, normally inconsistent with Islamic ethics that a person should reclaim anything he has made over to another by way of donation or gift. In the Hadith this disgraceful act is likened to a dog licking its own vomit. (See Bukhari, 'Hibah', 30; Nasii, 'Hibah', 3, etc. - Ed.)

In the case of a husband, in particular, it is a matter of the utmost disgrace that, at the time of saying farewell to his divorced wife he should try to dispossess her of what he had once given her out of his own goodwill. On the contrary, the morals that Islam seeks to cultivate require that at the time of parting the husband ought to present her with a farewell gift. See (Verse 241 below.)

(252) In the terminology of Islamic Law this is known as khul', i.e. a woman's securing the annulment of her marriage through the payment of some compensation to her husband. Whatever settlement is made between a husband and wife should come into effect. If the matter is referred to the court, however, it will investigate only whether the wife has really become too disgusted with the husband to put up with him. (For the Traditions on the basis of which the author concludes this see the commentaries on this verse in Ibn Kathir and Qurtubi, see especially the latter, vol. 2, pp. 946-8 - Ed.) Once this is determined the court is entitled to fix the amount of payment incumbent on the wife as compensation for the repudiation of her marriage, and the husband will be bound to accept that amount and divorce his wife. In general, the jurists believe that the payment, thus fixed, should not be higher than the original mahr paid by the husband.

The divorce that comes into effect is irrevocable and brings separation into effect immediately. Since the woman has paid compensation, she has in effect purchased the right of repudiation and the husband, therefore, has ceased to have the right to revoke the divorce. If, however, the spouses agree to recontract marriage, they may do so.

According to the majority of jurists the period of waiting under khul' is the same as under divorce. However, there are

several Traditions in Abu Da'ud, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah, etc., which show that the Prophet fixed the period of waiting at one menstrual period, and that 'Uthman applied this in a case which he decided. (See Ibn Kathir's commentary on the verse.)

فَاِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلَا تَحِلُّ لَهٗ مِنْۢ بَعْدُ حَتّٰى تَنْكِحَ زَوْجًا غَيْرَهٗ ؕ فَاِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَاۤ اَنْ يَّتَرَاجَعَاۤ اِنْ ظَنَّاۤ اَنْ يُّقِيْمَا حُدُوْدَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ تِلْكَ حُدُوْدُ اللّٰهِ يُبَيِّنُهَا لِقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ ۲۳۰

(2-230) Then, if he divorces her (for the third time, after having pronounced the divorce twice), she shall not be lawful to him unless she first takes another man for a husband, and he divorces her. (253) There is no blame upon them if both of them return to one another thereafter, provided they think that they will be able to keep within the bounds set by Allah. These are the bounds of Allah which He makes clear to a people who have knowledge (of the consequences of violating those bounds).

(253) It is known from authentic Traditions that it is totally illegitimate for a person to arrange the marriage of his divorced wife with someone else on the understanding that the latter will divorce her to make it possible for the former husband to recontract marriage with that woman. Such trickery would in fact be an act of sheer sexual corruption and would not render the woman liable to remarriage with her former husband. According to a Tradition transmitted from 'Ali, Ibn Mas'ud, Abu Hurayrah and 'Uqbah ibn 'Amir, the Prophet pronounced his curse on those who arrange, as well as on those who agree to contract, such fictitious marriages. (See Muslim. 'Talaq', l5, 71; Nasa'i, 'Talaq', 8; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 1, P. 314 and vol. 5, p. 334; Al-Muwatta', 'Talaq', 27; Abu Da'ud. 'Talaq'. 10 - Ed.)

وَ اِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَآءَ فَبَلَغْنَ اَجَلَهُنَّ فَاَمْسِكُوْهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوْفٍ اَوْ سَرِّحُوْهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوْفٍ وَّ لَا تُمْسِكُوْهُنَّ ضِرَارًا لِّتَعْتَدُوْا ۚ وَ مَنْ يَّفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهٗ ؕ وَ لَا تَتَّخِذُوْۤا اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ هُزُوًا ۚ وَ اذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَ مَاۤ اَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنَ الْكِتٰبِ وَ الْحِكْمَةِ يَعِظُكُمْ بِهٖ ۚ وَ اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَ اعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ۲۳۱

(2-231) And so, when you divorce women and they reach the end of their waiting term, then either retain them in a fair manner or let them go in a fair manner. And do not retain them to their hurt or by way of transgression; whosoever will do that will indeed wrong himself. (254)

Do not take the Signs of Allah in jest and remember Allah's favor upon you. He exhorts you to revere the Book and the Wisdom that He has sent down upon you.(255) Fear Allah, and know well that Allah has full knowledge of everything.

(254) It is absolutely improper that a person should revoke the divorce he pronounced on his wife before the lapse of the period of waiting merely in order to use this revocation as a pretext to harass and torment her . God commands that if a person revokes the divorce this decision should be prompted by a sincere desire to live together amicably. Should that intention be lacking, it is better to part company in a graceful manner see further(n. 250 above).

(255) Muslims should not forget that by teaching them the Book and Wisdom, God entrusted them with the glorious task of guiding the world. They should also not forget that they were appointed the 'community, of the middle way' and appointed as witnesses to good and righteousness see (verse 143 above). It does not become them, therefore, to indulge in sophistry and to play with the verses of the Book of God, to exploit the words of the Law to their advantage in achieving ends counter to its spirit, and to slump into injustice and other evil behavior instead of directing the world to the Right Way.

وَ اِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَآءَ فَبَلَغْنَ اَجَلَهُنَّ فَلَا تَعْضُلُوْ هُنَّ اَنْ يَّنْكِحْنَ اَزْوَاجَهُنَّ اِذَا تَرَاضَوْا بَيْنَهُمْ
بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ ذٰلِكَ يُوْعَظُ بِهٖ مَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ ذٰلِكُمْ اَزْكٰى لَكُمْ
وَاَطْهَرُ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ وَاَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ٢٣٢

(2-232) When you divorce women and they have completed their waiting term do not hinder them from marrying other men if they have agreed to this in a fair manner. (256)

That is an admonition to every one of you who believes in Allah and the Last Day; that is a cleaner and purer way for you. For Allah knows whereas you do not know.

(256) This is a directive to the relatives of the divorced woman. When a woman is divorced by her husband and he fails to revoke the divorce before the expiry of the waiting period, the relatives of the woman should not try to prevent the couple from re-marrying if they agree to do so. This verse may also be interpreted to mean that if a divorced woman wants to contract marriage with someone other than her former husband after the expiry of the waiting period, the former husband should not obstruct this marriage by making malicious propaganda against the woman he has forsaken.

That is an admonition to every one of you who believes in Allah and the Last Day; that is a cleaner and purer way for you. For Allah knows whereas you do not know.

وَالْوٰلِدٰتُ يُرْضِعْنَ اَوْلَادَهُنَّ حَوْلَيْنِ كَامِلَيْنِ لِمَنْ اَرَادَ اَنْ يُّتِمَّ الرَّضَاعَةَ ؕ وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُوْدِ لَهٗ
رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ ؕ لَا تُكَلَّفُ نَفْسٌ اِلَّا وُسْعَهَا ۚ لَا تُضَآرَّ وَالِدَةٌ بِوَلَدِهَا وَلَا مَوْلُوْدٌ لَّهٗ
بِوَلَدِهٖ ؕ★ وَعَلَى الْوَارِثِ مِثْلُ ذٰلِكَ ۚ فَاِنْ اَرَادَا فِصَالًا عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِّنْهُمَا وَتَشَاوُرٍ فَلَا جُنَاحَ
عَلَيْهِمَا ؕ وَاِنْ اَرَدْتُّمْ اَنْ تَسْتَرْضِعُوْۤا اَوْلَادَكُمْ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ اِذَا سَلَّمْتُمْ مَّاۤ اٰتَيْتُمْ
بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ ؕ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ ۲۳۳

(2-233) If they (i.e. the fathers) wish that the period of suckling for their children be completed, mothers may suckle their children for two whole years. (257) (In such a case) it is incumbent upon him who has begotten the child to provide them (i.e. divorced women) their sustenance and clothing in a fair

manner. But none shall be burdened with more than he is able to bear; neither shall a mother suffer because of her child nor shall the father be made to suffer because he has begotten him. The same duty towards the suckling mother rests upon the heir (258) as upon him (i.e. the father). And if both (the parents) decide, by mutual consent and consultation, to wean the child, there is no blame on them; if you decide to have other women suckle your children there is no blame upon you, provided you hand over its compensation in a fair manner. Fear Allah and know well that Allah sees all that you do.

(257) This injunction applies to the condition where the couple have separated either because of divorce, or klul' see (n. 252 above) or ' faskh (annulment) or tafriq (repudiation as a result of judicial decision) and the woman is nursing a child.

(258) That is, if the father dies, whoever replaces him as the guardian of the child will be responsible for fulfilling this claim.

وَالَّذِيْنَ يُتَوَفَّوْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَذَرُوْنَ اَزْوَاجًا يَّتَرَبَّصْنَ بِاَنْفُسِهِنَّ اَرْبَعَةَ اَشْهُرٍ وَّعَشْرًا ۚ فَاِذَا بَلَغْنَ اَجَلَهُنَّ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيْمَا فَعَلْنَ فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرٌ ۲۳۴

(2-234) The wives of men who have died must observe a waiting period of four months and ten days; (259) when they have reached the end of the waiting term, there is no blame upon you regarding what they may do with themselves in a fair manner. Allah is well aware of what you do.

(259) The waiting period owing to the death of the husband is obligatory even for a woman with whom consummation of marriage has not taken place. A pregnant woman, however, is exempted from this. Her waiting period expires the husband's death and the childbirth is less than the waiting period prescribed by Law.

'To observe a waiting period' does not mean merely that they should refrain from marrying, but also from self-adornment.

Hence we find categorical directives in the Hadith that a widow should neither wear colorful and showy dresses and jewelry, make use of henna, kohl, and perfumes, nor set her hair in an attractive style. There is disagreement, however, as to whether the widow may go out of her house during the waiting period. 'Umar, 'UthmaAn, Ibn 'Umar, Zayd ibn Thabit, Ibn Mas'uid, Ummn Salamah, Said ibn al-Musayyib, Ibrahim al-Nakha'i, Muhammad ibn Sirin and the founders of the four legal schools are of the opinion that during the waiting period a woman should stay in the house in which her husband died. During the daytime she may go out to do necessary errands, but her residence should be her own home. On contrary, 'A'ishah, Ibn 'Abbas, 'Ali, Jabir ibn 'Abd Allah. 'Ata'. Ta'us, Hasan al-Basri. 'Umar ibn'Abd al'Aziz and the Zahiris are of the opinion that a widow may spend her waiting period wherever she likes, and may even go on journeys. (See the commentary on the verse in Jassas. vol. 1, pp. 418 f. - Ed.)

وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ فِيۡمَا عَرَّضۡتُمۡ بِهٖ مِنۡ خِطۡبَةِ النِّسَآءِ اَوۡ اَكۡنَنۡتُمۡ فِىۡۤ اَنۡفُسِكُمۡ عَلِمَ اللّٰهُ اَنَّكُمۡ سَتَذۡكُرُوۡنَهُنَّ وَلٰكِنۡ لَّا تُوَاعِدُوۡهُنَّ سِرًّا اِلَّاۤ اَنۡ تَقُوۡلُوۡا قَوۡلًا مَّعۡرُوۡفًا ۬ؕ وَلَا تَعۡزِمُوۡا عُقۡدَةَ النِّكَاحِ حَتّٰى يَبۡلُغَ الۡكِتٰبُ اَجَلَهٗ ؕ وَاعۡلَمُوۡۤا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعۡلَمُ مَا فِىۡۤ اَنۡفُسِكُمۡ فَاحۡذَرُوۡهُ ۚ وَاعۡلَمُوۡۤا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوۡرٌ حَلِيۡمٌ ۲۳۵ ؕ

(2-235) There is no blame upon you whether you hint at a marriage proposal to such women or keep the proposal hidden in your hearts. Allah knows that you will think of them in that connection. But do not make any secret engagement with them and speak openly in an honorable manner. Do not resolve on the marriage tie until the ordained term has come to its end. Know well that Allah knows even what is in your hearts. So, have fear of Him and know well that Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Forbearing.

لَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ اِنۡ طَلَّقۡتُمُ النِّسَآءَ مَا لَمۡ تَمَسُّوۡهُنَّ اَوۡ تَفۡرِضُوۡا لَهُنَّ فَرِيۡضَةً ۖ وَّمَتِّعُوۡهُنَّ عَلَى الۡمُوۡسِعِ قَدَرُهٗ وَعَلَى الۡمُقۡتِرِ قَدَرُهٗ ۚ مَتَاعًۢا بِالۡمَعۡرُوۡفِ ۚ حَقًّا عَلَى الۡمُحۡسِنِيۡنَ ﴿۲۳۶﴾

(2-236) There is no blame upon you if you divorce your wives before you have touched them or settled a bridal gift upon them. But even in this case you should make some provision for them: (260) the affluent, according to his means; the straitened, according to his means – a provision in fair manner. That is a duty upon the good-doers.

(260) This sundering of the matrimonial contract after it has been concluded does cause some harm to the woman; God has ordered, therefore, that the person concerned should compensate for the loss according to his capacity.

وَاِنۡ طَلَّقۡتُمُوۡهُنَّ مِنۡ قَبۡلِ اَنۡ تَمَسُّوۡهُنَّ وَقَدۡ فَرَضۡتُمۡ لَهُنَّ فَرِيۡضَةً فَنِصۡفُ مَا فَرَضۡتُمۡ اِلَّاۤ اَنۡ يَّعۡفُوۡنَ اَوۡ يَعۡفُوَا الَّذِىۡ بِيَدِهٖ عُقۡدَةُ النِّكَاحِ ؕ وَاَنۡ تَعۡفُوۡۤا اَقۡرَبُ لِلتَّقۡوٰى ؕ وَلَا تَنۡسَوُا الۡفَضۡلَ بَيۡنَكُمۡ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ بَصِيۡرٌ ﴿۲۳۷﴾

(2-237) And if you divorce them before you touch them or settle a bridal gift upon them, then (give them) half of what you have settled unless either the women act leniently and forgo their claim, or he in whose hand is the marriage tie acts leniently (and pays the full amount). If you act leniently, it is closer to God-fearing. And forget not to act gracefully with one another, (261) for indeed Allah sees all that you do.

(261) Magnanimity in dealings is essential if human relationships are to remain sound and pleasant. If everyone were to stick strictly to his legal rights and claims, a pleasant social life would he rendered impossible.

حٰفِظُوۡا عَلَى الصَّلَوٰتِ وَالصَّلٰوةِ الۡوُسۡطٰى �ۛ وَقُوۡمُوۡا لِلّٰهِ قٰنِتِيۡنَ ﴿۲۳۸﴾

(2-238) Be watchful over the Prayers, [262] and over praying with the utmost excellence, [263] and stand before Allah as would utterly obedient servants.

(262) Having mentioned the laws for the guidance of human society, God rounds off this address by emphasizing Prayer, for it is Prayers which instill in man the fear of God. They inculcate the feelings of goodness and purity and the disposition to obey the ordinances of God, and foster adherence to righteousness. Without Prayer it would be impossible for men to persist in observing the laws of God, and they would likely be swept away by a current of defiance and disobedience, as happened in the case of the Jews.

(263) 'Re expression al-salat al-wusta has been variously interpreted to mean the Morning, Mid-Day, Sunset or Night Prayers. But no direct statement explaining this expression has come down from the Prophet himself. All the divergent opinions are deductions made by scholars. The opinion of the majority, seems to be inclined in favour of the Afternoon ('Asr) Prayer. since it is claimed that on one occasion the Prophet alluded to this as al-salat al-wusta. The event cited in support of this inference is that during the Battle of the Ditch the Prophet once so preoccupied with the problems posed by the siege of Madinah, by the polytheists, that he could not perform his 'Asr Prayer within the scheduled time. and the time of sunset drew close. On that occasion the Prophet said: 'God fill the graves and houses of these people with fire. They have caused us to our wusta (mid-most) Prayer.' This statement led people to believe that the expression 'mid-most Prayer' referred to the 'Asr Prayer. It seems more likely, however, that the Prophet meant that the cares of the battle had prevented him and his followers from performing the Prayer in an excellent way; the delay in the Prayer meant that instead of praying with equanimity, concentration and total devotion, they were forced by circumstances to pray hurriedly.

The adjective wusta in addition to signifying the middle position of the subject that it qualifies, also signifies its excellence. Hence the expression could legitimately be interpreted both in the sense of the middle Prayer as well as in

the sense of the Prayer which is performed at the right time and with full devotion and attention to God, a Prayer which contains all the attributes of excellence. The admonition which follows, 'stand before Allah as utterly, obedient servants', seems to indicate what was meant by the 'mid-most Prayer'.

فَاِنۡ خِفۡتُمۡ فَرِجَالًا اَوۡ رُكۡبَانًا ۚ فَاِذَاۤ اَمِنۡتُمۡ فَاذۡكُرُوا اللّٰهَ كَمَا عَلَّمَكُمۡ مَّا لَمۡ تَكُوۡنُوۡا تَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ۝٢٣٩

(2-239) And even if you face the state of fear, still perform the Prayer whether on foot or riding; and when you are secure, remember Allah in the manner that He taught you, the manner that you did not know earlier.

وَالَّذِيۡنَ يُتَوَفَّوۡنَ مِنۡكُمۡ وَيَذَرُوۡنَ اَزۡوَاجًا ۖ وَّصِيَّةً لِّاَزۡوَاجِهِمۡ مَّتَاعًا اِلَى الۡحَوۡلِ غَيۡرَ اِخۡرَاجٍ ۚ فَاِنۡ خَرَجۡنَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ فِىۡ مَا فَعَلۡنَ فِىۡۤ اَنۡفُسِهِنَّ مِنۡ مَّعۡرُوۡفٍ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَزِيۡزٌ حَكِيۡمٌ ۝٢٤٠

(2-240) Those of you who die leaving behind your wives (264) should make testament of one year’s provision without expulsion in favour of your wives; and if they themselves depart, there shall be no blame upon you for what they may do with themselves in an honourable manner. Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise.

(264) The main discourse has already come to an end see (**verse 238 an n. 262**) above. These concluding remarks are supplementary,.

وَلِلۡمُطَلَّقٰتِ مَتَاعٌۢ بِالۡمَعۡرُوۡفِ ۖ حَقًّا عَلَى الۡمُتَّقِيۡنَ ۝٢٤١

(2-241) Likewise, let there be a fair provision for the divorced women; this is an obligation on the God-fearing.

كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَـكُمۡ اٰيٰتِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمۡ تَعۡقِلُوۡنَ ۝٢٤٢

(2-242) Thus Allah makes His injunctions clear to you that you may understand.

لَمۡ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيۡنَ خَرَجُوۡا مِنۡ دِيَارِهِمۡ وَهُمۡ اُلُوۡفٌ حَذَرَ الۡمَوۡتِ فَقَالَ لَهُمُ اللّٰهُ مُوۡتُوۡا ثُمَّ اَحۡيَاهُمۡ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَذُوۡ فَضۡلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكۡثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَشۡكُرُوۡنَ ۝

(2-243) (O Messenger), have you thought of those who went forth from their homes for fear of death even though they were in their thousands? (265) Allah said to them: “Die!” Then He restored them to life. (266) Indeed Allah is Bounteous to mankind; but most people do not give thanks in return.

(265) Here begins a fresh discourse, in which Muslims are urged to struggle and make financial sacrifices for God's cause. Moreover, they have been warned to avoid those forms of corruption which eventually led the Children of Israel into decline and degeneration. In order to appreciate this discourse it should be borne in mind that it was revealed when the Muslims had been driven out of Makka and had lived in Madinah for year and a half. Exasperated by the wrongs to which the unbelievers subjected them, the Muslims had again and again asked the Prophet to permit them to fight. But when they were at long last asked to fight, some of them showed a degree of reluctance and disinclination see (**verse 216** )above. Their attention is now drawn, therefore, to two incidents in the history of the Israelites from which the may learn their lesson.

(266) This refers to the exodus of the Israelites. Surah 5 see( verse 20 ff) ) gives some details of this incident. The Israelites had left Egypt in large numbers and were wandering in the desert, eager to find a home. But when at God's command Moses ordered them to drive the Canaanites out of Palestine and conquer that land, they showed cowardice and refused to proceed. Eventually God let them wander about for forty years till one full generation of Israelites had died and been replaced by a

new one reared in the tough conditions of desert life. It was only, then that God enabled the Israelites to overcome the Canaanites. Their former condition is described as death, whereas the later development is seen as their restoration to life.

وَقَاتِلُوۡا فِىۡ سَبِيۡلِ اللّٰهِ وَاعۡلَمُوۡۤا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيۡعٌ عَلِيۡمٌ ﴿۲۴۴﴾

(2-244) So fight in the Way of Allah and know well that Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

مَنۡ ذَا الَّذِىۡ يُقۡرِضُ اللّٰهَ قَرۡضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضٰعِفَهٗ لَهٗۤ اَضۡعَافًا كَثِيۡرَةً ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَقۡبِضُ وَيَبۡصُۜطُ ۪ وَاِلَيۡهِ تُرۡجَعُوۡنَ ﴿۲۴۵﴾

(2-245) Who of you will lend Allah a goodly loan [267] which He will return after multiplying it for him manifold? For Allah has the power both to decrease and increase, and to Him will you be returned.

(267) 'Goodly loan' signifies whatever one gives to another person selflessly, and from absolutely pure motives. God describes whatever man spends in this manner as a loan made to none other than Him, and He undertakes to repay that loan and to repay it several-fold. The stipulation, however. is that the loan should be a 'goodly' one; that is, it should not he tainted with selfish designs and should be given for the sake of God, to be spent for purposes pleasing to Him

They said: 'And why would we not fight in the way of Allah when we have been torn from our homes and our children?' But when fighting was ordained for them they turned back, except a few of them. Allah is well aware of the wrong-doers.

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اِلَى الۡمَلَاِ مِنۡۢ بَنِىۡۤ اِسۡرَآءِيۡلَ مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِ مُوۡسٰى ۘ اِذۡ قَالُوۡا لِنَبِىٍّ لَّهُمُ ابۡعَثۡ لَنَا مَلِكًا نُّقَاتِلۡ فِىۡ سَبِيۡلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ قَالَ هَلۡ عَسَيۡتُمۡ اِنۡ كُتِبَ عَلَيۡكُمُ الۡقِتَالُ اَلَّا تُقَاتِلُوۡا ؕ قَالُوۡا

وَمَا لَنَآ اَلَّا نُقَاتِلَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَقَدْ اُخْرِجْنَا مِنْ دِيَارِنَا وَاَبْنَآئِنَا ۭ فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ تَوَلَّوْا اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا مِّنْهُمْ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِالظّٰلِمِيْنَ ۝

(2-246) (O Messenger), have you thought of what happened with the elders of the Children of Israel after Moses? They asked one of their Prophets: “Set up for us a king so that we may fight in the way of Allah.” (268) He said: “Would you possibly refrain from fighting if fighting is ordained for you?” They said: “And why would we not fight in the way of Allah when we have been torn from our homes and our children?” But when fighting was ordained for them they turned back, except a few of them. Allah is well aware of the wrong-doers.

(268) This took place about a thousand years before Christ. At that time the Israelites were persecuted by the Amalekites who had deprived them of the greater part of Palestine. The Prophet Samuel, who was then ruling over the Israelites, was old. The elders of Israel, therefore, felt the need to appoint as their head someone else under whose leadership they could wage wars. By that time, however, the Israelites had become so deeply infected with Ignorance, and the customs and practices of non-Muslim nations had made such inroads into their lives that the distinction between a religious state committed to serving God and secular monarchy was lost on them. They consequently asked God to appoint a king rather than a religious ruler (khalifah) over them. The information contained in the Bible is as follows:

Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. . . . Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, 'Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint for us a king to govern us like all the nations.' But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, 'Give us a king to govern us'. And Samuel prayed to the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, 'Hearken to the voice of the people in what they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. According to all the

deeds which they have done to me, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you . . . ' So Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking a king for him. He said, 'These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you; he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen, and to run before his chariots. And he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plough his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make the implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants. He will take the tenth of your grain and your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. He will take you men-servants and maid-servants, and the best of your cattle and asses, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. And on that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the Lord will not answer you in that day.' But the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, and they said. 'No! But we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may govern us and go out before us and fight our battles.' And when Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, 'Hearken to their voice, and make them a king.' Samuel then said to the men of Israel, 'Go every man to his city.' (1 Samuel 7: 15; 8: 4-22.)

And Samuel said to the people ? 'And when you saw that Nahash the king of Ammonites came against you, You said to me, No, but a king shall reign over us, when the Lord your God was your king. And now behold the king whom you have chosen, for whom you have asked; behold, the Lord has set a king over you. If you will fear the Lord and serve him and hearken to his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the Lord your God, it will be well; but if you will not hearken to the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then the hand of the Lord will be against you and your king. Now therefore stand

still and see this great thing, which the Lord will do before your eyes. Is it not wheat harvest today? I will call upon the Lord, that he may send thunder and rain; and you shall know and see that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking for yourselves a king.' So Samuel called upon the Lord, and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel. And all the people said to Samuel, 'Pray for your servants to the Lord your God, that we may not die, for we have added to all our sins this evil, to ask for a king.' And Samuel said to the people, 'Fear not; you have done all this evil, yet do not turn aside front following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart, and do not turn aside after vain things which cannot profit or save, for they are vain. For the Lord will not cast away his people, for his great name's sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you a people for himself. Moreover as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you; and I will instruct you in the good and right way?' (**1 Samuel 12- 6-23**).

These statements from Samuel make it clear that the demand to appoint a king was disagreeable to God and to His Prophet. It might be asked, however, why the Quran does not contain any denunciation of this demand of the elders of Israel. The reason is that to the purpose for which this incident has been cited the appropriateness and otherwise of the demand is irrelevant. The purpose here is to show the extent to which cowardice and self-indulgence had become part of Israelite life, and to show how the lack of moral restraint had come to characterize their conduct. It is these which ultimately led to their decline. The aim of the Quranic narrative is to enable Muslims to derive a lesson from this and to ensure that these weaknesses do not creep into their own lives.

وَقَالَ لَهُمۡ نَبِيُّهُمۡ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَدۡ بَعَثَ لَـكُمۡ طَالُوۡتَ مَلِكًا ؕ قَالُوۡۤا اَنّٰى يَكُوۡنُ لَهُ الۡمُلۡكُ عَلَيۡنَا
وَنَحۡنُ اَحَقُّ بِالۡمُلۡكِ مِنۡهُ وَلَمۡ يُؤۡتَ سَعَةً مِّنَ الۡمَالِ ؕ قَالَ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ اصۡطَفٰٮهُ عَلَيۡكُمۡ وَزَادَهٗ

بَسۡطَةً فِى الۡعِلۡمِ وَ الۡجِسۡمِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يُؤۡتِىۡ مُلۡكَهٗ مَنۡ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيۡمٌ ﴿۲۴۷﴾

(2-247) And their Prophet said to them: “Indeed Allah has sent forth Saul (Talut) as your king.” (269) They said: “By what right shall he rule over us when we are more worthy than he to dominion, for he is not very wealthy?” He said: “Allah has chosen him over you and has endowed him abundantly with both intellectual and physical capacities. Allah indeed has the power to bestow dominion upon whomsoever He wills. Allah is All-Resourceful, All- Knowing.”

(269) In the Bible he is called Saul. He was a thirty-year-old Benjaminite youth. 'There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he; from his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people' (1 Samuel 9: 2). He went out in search of the lost asses of his father. During this search, he passed through the house of Samuel and God informed Samuel that this was the person who had been chosen to govern the people of Israel. Samuel brought Saul to his house, took a vial of oil, poured it on his head,. kissed him and said: 'Has not the Lord anointed you to be the prince over His people of Israel? ' (**1 Samuel 10: 1**). Samuel later called the people of Israel together and proclaimed Saul to be their king (**1 Samuel 10: 17**).

This was the second Israelite to be anointed by God's command to a position of leadership. Earlier, Aaron had been anointed as the chief priest. The third case of anointment was that of David, and the fourth that of Jesus. There is no clear statement in the Quran regarding the designation of Talut (the Saul of the Bible) to prophethood. The mere fact of his being appointed a ruler does not necessarily warrant considering him a Prophet as well.

وَقَالَ لَهُمۡ نَبِيُّهُمۡ اِنَّ اٰيَةَ مُلۡكِهٖۤ اَنۡ يَّاۡتِيَكُمُ التَّابُوۡتُ فِيۡهِ سَكِيۡنَةٌ مِّنۡ رَّبِّكُمۡ وَبَقِيَّةٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ اٰلُ مُوۡسٰى وَاٰلُ هٰرُوۡنَ تَحۡمِلُهُ الۡمَلٰٓئِكَةُ ؕ اِنَّ فِىۡ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً لَّكُمۡ اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ مُّؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ﴿۲۴۸﴾

(2-248) And their Prophet said to them: “The Sign of his dominion is that in his reign the Ark, wherein is inner peace for you, will be brought back to you, and the sacred relics left behind by the house of Moses and the house of Aaron borne by angels. (270) Truly in that is a Sign for you, if indeed you are people of faith.”

(270) The Biblical version of this incident is different from the Quranic one. The former sheds light, however, on certain details of the incident. It shows that during a military engagement the pagan Philistines had captured the 'Ark of the covenant'. Terrified of the scourge and pestilence which spread wherever they carried the Ark, these pagans placed it on a cart driven by milk cows, and sent it off. (**1 Samuel 5-6 - Ed**.) Perhaps the Quran alludes to this when it mentions angels, since the cart was driverless and it was the angels who kept it in their custody and brought it to the Israelites. The Quranic statement, that in the Ark 'lies inward peace for you', can be understood in the light of the Biblical statements that the Israelites regarded the Ark as highly auspicious, and as an emblem of their triumph and victory. When they were deprived of it, they began to feel that they had been deprived of the mercy of God. The return of the Ark, therefore, had a highly salutary effect on them as it strengthened their sagging morale and raised their spirits.

The Quranic mention of 'the sacred relics left behind by the house of Aaron' seems to allude to the Tablets of Law bequeathed to Moses on Mount Sinai. The Ark is also said to have contained the original copy of the Torah, which Moses himself had had transcribed and which he had himself handed over to the Levites. The Ark is also supposed to have contained a golden urn holding the manna (**Hebrews 9: 2 ff - Ed**.), in order that the coming generations might recall God's benevolence to their forefathers during their wandering in the desert. The Ark also probably contained the rod of Moses which was one of the great

miracles of God. (**Hebrews 9: 5 mentions the rod of Aaron - Ed**.)

فَلَمَّا فَصَلَ طَالُوۡتُ بِالۡجُنُوۡدِ ۙ قَالَ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ مُبۡتَلِيۡكُمۡ بِنَهَرٍ ۚ فَمَنۡ شَرِبَ مِنۡهُ فَلَيۡسَ مِنِّىۡ ۚ وَمَنۡ لَّمۡ يَطۡعَمۡهُ فَاِنَّهٗ مِنِّىۡۤ اِلَّا مَنِ اغۡتَرَفَ غُرۡفَةً ۢ بِيَدِهٖ ۚ فَشَرِبُوۡا مِنۡهُ اِلَّا قَلِيۡلًا مِّنۡهُمۡ ؕ فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَهٗ هُوَ وَالَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا مَعَهٗ ۙ قَالُوۡا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا الۡيَوۡمَ بِجَالُوۡتَ وَجُنُوۡدِهٖ ؕ قَالَ الَّذِيۡنَ يَظُنُّوۡنَ اَنَّهُمۡ مُّلٰقُوا اللّٰهِ ۙ كَمۡ مِّنۡ فِئَةٍ قَلِيۡلَةٍ غَلَبَتۡ فِئَةً كَثِيۡرَةًۢ بِاِذۡنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ مَعَ الصّٰبِرِيۡنَ ۝

(2-249) When Saul (Talut) set out with his forces he said: “Allah will try you with a river, and whoever drinks of it does not belong to me; he who refrains from tasting it – unless it be just a palmful – he indeed belongs to me.” Then all, except a few of them, drank their fill at the river. (271)

But as soon as Saul (Talut) and the believers with him went forth across the river, they said: “Today we have no strength to face Goliath (Jalut) and his forces.” (272) But those who believed that they were bound to meet their Lord said: “How often has a small party prevailed against a large party by the leave of Allah.” Allah is with those who remain steadfast.

(271) This may refer either to the river Jordan or to some other river or stream in that region. Saul wanted to take the Israelite army across the river. He was aware, however, that there was little moral discipline and restraint left in them. Hence he hit upon this device to distinguish the worthy from the worthy less. Those who could not endure thirst even for a short while, would not be expected to remain steadfast in their confrontation with an enemy at whose hands they had already taken a beating.

(272) These were presumable the people who had shown their impatience on the bank of the river. (**See the preceding note - Ed**.)

وَلَمَّا بَرَزُوا لِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا أَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا وَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٢٥٠﴾

(2-250) And when they went forth against Goliath (Jalut) and his forces, they prayed: “Our Lord! Shower us with patience, and set our feet firm, and grant us victory over this unbelieving people.”

فَهَزَمُوهُم بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَقَتَلَ دَاوُودُ جَالُوتَ وَآتَاهُ اللَّهُ الْمُلْكَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَهُ مِمَّا يَشَاءُ ۗ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُم بِبَعْضٍ لَّفَسَدَتِ الْأَرْضُ وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢٥١﴾

(2-251) Thereupon by Allah’s leave they put the unbelievers to flight, and David killed Goliath, [273] and Allah granted him dominion and wisdom, and imparted to him the knowledge of whatever He willed. And were it not that Allah repelled some people with another, the earth would surely be overlaid with mischief. [274] But Allah is Bounteous to the people of the world (and thus extirpates mischief).

(273) David was then in the early years of his youth. By chance he joined the army of Saul just when the mighty champion of the Philistine army had challenged the Israelite army to combat. None of the Israelites had the courage to take up the challenge. On seeing this, David took on Goliath in a duel and slew him. From then on, David could do no wrong in the eyes of the Israelites. Saul gave him the hand of his daughter in marriage and ultimately he became the ruler of the Israelites. (**For details see 1 Samuel, chapters 17 and 18**.)

(274) This enunciates the principle according to which God treats the nations as a part of the Divine system governing the world. He allows various nations to attain power and strength within certain limits. But when any nation begins to commit wrongs and exceed reasonable limits. God brings forth another nation as a counterweight, Were the dominion of one nation or party to endure for ever, and were its capacity to perpetrate wrongs granted in perpetuity, God's earth would become full of corruption and wickedness.

تِلۡكَ اٰيٰتُ اللّٰهِ نَتۡلُوۡهَا عَلَيۡكَ بِالۡحَـقِّ وَاِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الۡمُرۡسَلِيۡنَ ۝♦

(2-252) These are the Signs of Allah which We recite to you in Truth, for indeed you are one of those entrusted with the Message.

تِلۡكَ الرُّسُلُ فَضَّلۡنَا بَعۡضَهُمۡ عَلٰى بَعۡضٍ ۘ مِنۡهُمۡ مَّنۡ كَلَّمَ اللّٰهُ وَرَفَعَ بَعۡضَهُمۡ دَرَجٰتٍ ؕ وَاٰتَيۡنَا عِيۡسَى ابۡنَ مَرۡيَمَ الۡبَيِّنٰتِ وَاَيَّدۡنٰهُ بِرُوۡحِ الۡقُدُسِ ؕ وَلَوۡ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ مَا اقۡتَتَلَ الَّذِيۡنَ مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِهِمۡ مِّنۡۢ بَعۡدِ مَا جَآءَتۡهُمُ الۡبَيِّنٰتُ وَلٰكِنِ اخۡتَلَفُوۡا فَمِنۡهُمۡ مَّنۡ اٰمَنَ وَمِنۡهُمۡ مَّنۡ كَفَرَ ؕ وَلَوۡ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ مَا اقۡتَتَلُوۡا ۫ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَفۡعَلُ مَا يُرِيۡدُ ۝♦

(2-253) And these Messengers (who have been designated to guide people), We have exalted some of them above the others. Among them are such as were spoken to by Allah Himself, and some He exalted in other respects. And We granted Jesus, son of Mary, Clear Signs and supported him with the spirit of holiness. Had He willed, those who had seen these Clear Signs would not have fought one another thereafter. But (it was not the will of Allah to prevent people from disagreement by compulsion, hence) they differed among themselves whereby some attained faith and others denied the Truth. Yet had Allah so willed they would not have fought one another. Allah does whatever He wills.
(275)

(275) The main cause of the differences which arose after people had received true knowledge through the Prophets, and which were even aggravated into feuds and wars, is not that God was helpless, and lacked the power to put an end to the fighting. Had He willed so, no one would have had the power to defy the teachings of the Prophets, to take the course of disbelief and rebellion against Him, and to spread mischief and corruption in His world. But it was not His will to deprive human beings of their free-will and choice, and to compel them to follow a particular course. He has created human beings on earth in order to test them and hence endowed them with the freedom to choose from the various alternative courses of belief and action.

God did not appoint the Prophets as policemen to force people to faith and obedience. He sent them, instead, with reasonable arguments and clear signs in order to invite people to righteousness. Hence the cause of all the differences and wrangling and fighting which took place was that people, in exercising the free-will granted to them by God, followed divergent courses. In short, people follow divergent ways precisely because of God's omnipotent will that men should have a choice. It would be a grave misunderstanding to hold that people follow different paths because God failed to persuade people to follow the path which He wanted them to choose.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَنْفِقُوْا مِمَّا رَزَقْنٰكُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَّا بَيْعٌ فِيْهِ وَلَا خُلَّةٌ وَّلَا شَفَاعَةٌ ۭ وَالْكٰفِرُوْنَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ۝۲۵۴

(2-254) O you who believe! Spend out of what We have provided you (276) before there comes a Day when there will be no buying and selling, nor will friendship and intercession be of any avail. Indeed those who disbelieve are the wrong-doers. (277)

(276) This means spending in the way of God. The instruction given here is that those who have adopted the cause of the true faith should undertake financial sacrifices for its sake.

(277) Here the expression 'they who disbelieve' signifies either those who refused to obey God and held their property to be clearer than God's good pleasure, or those who did not believe in the Day of which they had been warned, or those who cherished the false illusion that in the Hereafter they would somehow be able to secure their salvation and that their association with men devoted to God would stand them in good stead for they would intercede with God on their behalf.

اللّٰهُ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ الۡحَیُّ الۡقَیُّوۡمُ ۚ لَا تَاۡخُذُهٗ سِنَةٌ وَّلَا نَوۡمٌ ؕ لَهٗ مَا فِی
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِی الۡاَرۡضِ ؕ مَنۡ ذَا الَّذِیۡ یَشۡفَعُ عِنۡدَهٗۤ اِلَّا بِاِذۡنِهٖ ؕ یَعۡلَمُ مَا بَیۡنَ اَیۡدِیۡهِمۡ وَمَا
خَلۡفَهُمۡ ۚ وَلَا یُحِیۡطُوۡنَ بِشَیۡءٍ مِّنۡ عِلۡمِهٖۤ اِلَّا بِمَا شَآءَ ۚ وَسِعَ کُرۡسِیُّهُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضَ ۚ
وَلَا یَـُٔوۡدُهٗ حِفۡظُهُمَا ۚ وَهُوَ الۡعَلِیُّ الۡعَظِیۡمُ ﴿۲۵۵﴾

(2-255) Allah, the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsisting by Whom all subsist, there is no god but He (278) Neither slumber seizes Him, nor sleep; (279) to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. (280) Who is there who might intercede with Him save with His leave? (281)

He knows what lies before them and what is hidden from them, whereas they cannot attain to anything of His knowledge save what He wills them to attain. (282) His Dominion (283) overspreads the heavens and the earth, and their upholding wearies Him not. He is All-High, All-Glorious. (284)

(278) Irrespective of the number of gods or objects of worship set up by ignorant people, the fact remains that godhead in its entirety, belongs exclusively to the Eternal Being, Who is indebted to no one for His existence. In fact, He is not only self-existent, but upon Him rests the entire order of the universe. He alone wields all sovereign authority over His dominion. None

shares either His attributes or His power and might, and no one has the same claims against the creatures as He. Hence, if anywhere in the heavens or the earth someone sets up anything or anybody as an object of worship and service (ilah) either instead of or in addition to the One True God this amounts to declaring war on reality.

(279) This is a refutation of the ideas of those who, in formulating their concepts of God, are inclined to consider God analogous to their own imperfect selves and hence ascribe to God the weaknesses characteristic of human beings. An instance at hand is the famous Biblical statement that God created the heavens and the earth in six days and on the seventh day He rested (**see Genesis, chapters 1 and 2**).

(280) To God belongs the heavens and the earth and everything therein. There is no one who shares anything with God in governance either of the heavens or of the earth. Any conceivable being other than God would necessarily be a part of the universe and thus belong to, and be a subject of, God rather than His partner and equal.

(281) This is a refutation of the ideas of those polytheists who consider either saints, angels or other beings to be so influential with God that if they were adamant in demanding something of Him, their demand would prevail. They are being told that, far from anyone having the power to impose his will on God, none - not even the greatest Prophets and the most highly esteemed angels - will dare utter one word in the majestic court of the Lord unless they are expressly permitted to do so.

(282) Here another blow is struck against polytheism. On the basis of the concept of God's unlimited sovereignty and omnipotence it was stressed, in the foregoing verses, that no one shares independently in God's governance of the universe, and no one is so powerful with God that his intercession would decisively influence His judgement. The same point is stressed here but in a different manner. It is pointed out that no one possesses the knowledge that would enable him to comprehend the order of the universe and the considerations underlying it, so no one can legitimately interfere in its governance. The knowledge of human beings, of jinn, of angels and of all other creatures is limited and imperfect. No one's knowledge embraces all the facts of the universe. If someone did have the right to interfere even in only a part of the universe, and if his suggestions were of necessity to be put into effect, the entire order of the universe would be disrupted. Creatures are incapable of understanding what is best for them, and do not have the capacity to know how best the universe should be governed. It is God alone Who knows everything.

(283) The Arabic term kursi signifies sovereignty, dominion and authority.

(The word Kursi has been variously interpreted by Muslim scholars. The literal meaning is obvious; it signifies that which one sits on. Scholars have differed, however, as to whether the word has been used in the Quran literally or figuratively. They have also disagreed whether the Kursi and 'Arsh Which occur in the Quran have one and the same meaning or are different. The main opinions expressed by the scholars are the following: (i) that Kursi signifies God's knowledge, a view attributed to Ibn 'Abbas; (ii) that it is identical with 'Arsh (Throne), a view attributed to Hasan al-Basri; (iii) that it signifies God's power (iv ) in opposition to such views a large number of scholars insist that Kursi should be considered a reality rather than be understood figuratively. In addition to many earlier scholars, this was vigorously championed by Ibn Taymiyah. It should be remembered, however, that Ibn

Taymiyah and others who hold this opinion, side by side with affirming that Kursi is a reality, also emphasize that man has no knowledge about the nature and modality of Kursi and that it ought to be treated as something unique, being related to God Who is unique both in His essence and attributes. (**See the commentaries of Alusi. Tabari, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir and Shawkani on this verse. See also Ibn Taymiyah, Majmu al-Fatawa 1bn Taymiyah, vol. 5, pp. 55-8 and vol. 6, pp. 584-5. It is interesting to note that Sayyid Qutb, (martyred 1386 A.H/966 C.E.**), a contemporary of Mawdudi and one of the most influential Islamic thinkers of our time, has interpreted the verse exactly, as Mawdudi did - Ed.)

(284) This verse is generally known as the 'Verse of the Throne' and it provides in one piece a knowledge of God without parallel.

The question that arises here is: What is the occasion for describing the Lord of the Universe and His attributes? In order to appreciate this one should rehearse the discourse beginning with( **verse 243**) and continuing up to this point. In this discourse the believers were urged to strive with their lives and belongings to establish the true faith and were warned to get rid of the weaknesses which had characterized the conduct of the Israelites. A fundamental fact about war - that victory and success do not depend upon superiority in either numbers or weapons - was then indicated. They depend rather on faith, fortitude, discipline and firm resolution. Thereafter the Divine wisdom underlying fighting was disclosed, namely that God removes one set of people by means of another in order to maintain the good administration of the world. For were one group's dominance to be assured in perpetuity, the lives of all other human beings mould become miserable.

This was followed by the clarification of a misunderstanding which often arises in the minds of ignorant people. This misunderstanding arose from the false assumption that God had sent His Prophets so that all diversity and disagreement might come to an end. The people who accepted

this premise, however, saw considerable diversity and disagreement, and were aware that falsehood existed side by side with Truth. They were agitated by the thought that this state of affairs might suggest helplessness on God's part, that He had failed to stamp out the evils He wanted to. In reply to this it was pointed out that it was not God's will to compel all human beings to follow one and the same way. Had it been so, man could not have deviated from the course set for him by God. This observation was followed by a passing reference to the subject with which the discourse opened. Finally, the point is made that no matter how many divergent beliefs, viewpoints, ways of life and conduct exist in actual life, the reality underlying the order of the universe is the one stated in this verse, and it remains unaffected by the misconceptions of people. On the other hand, however, it is not God's purpose to compel people to accept it. Whoever accepts it will find it to his own benefit; whoever rejects it, will find the result harmful.

لَآ إِكۡرَاهَ فِى ٱلدِّينِ ۖ قَد تَّبَيَّنَ ٱلرُّشۡدُ مِنَ ٱلۡغَىِّ ۚ فَمَن يَكۡفُرۡ بِٱلطَّٰغُوتِ وَيُؤۡمِنۢ بِٱللَّهِ فَقَدِ ٱسۡتَمۡسَكَ بِٱلۡعُرۡوَةِ ٱلۡوُثۡقَىٰ لَا ٱنفِصَامَ لَهَا ۗ وَٱللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ♦

(2-256) There is no compulsion in religion. [285] The Right Way stands clearly distinguished from the wrong. Hence he who rejects the evil ones [286] and believes in Allah has indeed taken hold of the firm, unbreakable handle. And Allah (Whom he has held for support) is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

(285) Din here signifies the belief about God embodied in the above 'Verse of the Throne' and the entire system of life which rests upon it. The verse means that the system of Islam, embracing belief, morals and practical conduct cannot be imposed by compulsion. These are not things to which people can be yoked forcibly.

(286) Literally taghut means anyone who exceeds his legitimate limits. In the Quranic terminology, however, it refers to the creature who exceeds the limits of his creatureliness and

arrogates to himself godhead and lordship. There are three stages of man's transgression and rebellion against God. The first stage is that one acknowledges in principle that obedience to God is right, but disregards it in practice. This is fisq (transgression). The second stage is that one not only disobeys but also rejects obedience in principle, and thus either refuses to become the subject of anyone at all or adopts someone other than God as the object of service and devotion. This is kufr (infidelity). The third stage is that one not only rebels against one's Lord but also imposes one's own will (in disregard of the Will of God - Ed.) on God's world and God's creatures. Anyone who reaches such a point is termed taghut and no one can be a true believer in God unless the authority of such a taghut (evil one) is rejected.

اَللّٰهُ وَلِیُّ الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا ۙ یُخۡرِجُهُمۡ مِّنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَی النُّوۡرِ ؕ وَالَّذِیۡنَ کَفَرُوۡۤا اَوۡلِیٰٓـُٔهُمُ الطَّاغُوۡتُ ۙ یُخۡرِجُوۡنَهُمۡ مِّنَ النُّوۡرِ اِلَی الظُّلُمٰتِ ؕ اُولٰٓئِکَ اَصۡحٰبُ النَّارِ ۚ هُمۡ فِیۡهَا خٰلِدُوۡنَ ﴿۲۵۷﴾

(2-257) Allah is the Guardian of those who believe, He brings them out of every darkness into light. (287)

And those who disbelieve, their guardians are the evil ones; (288) they bring them out of light into all kinds of darkness. These are destined for the Fire, and there shall they abide.

(287) The 'darkness' mentioned here means the darkness of Ignorance, which throws man off the path of salvation and well-being and directs his energies and efforts to wrong directions in defiance of reality. 'Light' here means the knowledge of Truth with the help of which man comes to know his own reality and that of the universe; this knowledge also shows him the purpose of his life, and thus leads him consciously, to adopt the Right Way.

(288) Here taghut see( n. 286) above has a plural connotation. It implies that by turning away from God a man is subjected not to

the tyranny of one, but to the tyranny of many tawaghit (evil one). One of these is Satan, who throws up new temptations and allurements. Another potential taghut (transgressor) is man's own animal self, which seeks to subjugate him to his appetites and desires. There are many more taghut in the world outside oneself ; one's wife and children, one's relatives, one's family and one's community, one's friends and acquaintances, one's social environment and one's people, one's leaders and guides, one's government and rulers are all potential taghut, each one of whom seeks to have his purposes served. Man remains subjected to these innumerable masters throughout his life, not knowing precisely whom he should please and whose displeasure he should avoid.

لَمۡ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِىۡ حَآجَّ اِبۡرٰهٖمَ فِىۡ رَبِّهٖۤ اَنۡ اٰتٰىهُ اللّٰهُ الۡمُلۡكَ ۘ اِذۡ قَالَ اِبۡرٰهٖمُ رَبِّىَ الَّذِىۡ
يُحۡىٖ وَيُمِيۡتُ ۙ قَالَ اَنَا اُحۡىٖ وَاُمِيۡتُ ؕ قَالَ اِبۡرٰهٖمُ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَاۡتِىۡ بِالشَّمۡسِ مِنَ الۡمَشۡرِقِ
فَاۡتِ بِهَا مِنَ الۡمَغۡرِبِ فَبُهِتَ الَّذِىۡ كَفَرَ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهۡدِى الۡقَوۡمَ الظّٰلِمِيۡنَ ۝

(2-258) Did you not consider the case of the person [289] who remonstrated with Abraham [290] about who was Abraham’s Lord just because Allah had granted him dominion? [291]

When Abraham said: “My Lord is He Who grants life and causes death,” he replied: “I grant life and I cause death.” Abraham said: “But surely Allah causes the sun to rise from the east; now you cause it to rise from the west.” Thereupon the denier of the Truth was confounded. [292] Allah does not direct the wrong-doers to the Right Way.

(289) It was stated earlier that God is the protector and supporter of the man of faith and brings him out of darkness into light whereas the protectors and supporters of the unbelievers are taghut who lead him out of light into darkness. It is to illustrate this that three examples are cited here. The first is that of a person before whom truth was put with such clear and

impressive arguments that he could not refute it, but since he had placed his reins in the hands of taghut, he still could not believe in it. The two subsequent examples are those of two people who clung to God as their support, and God drew them out of darkness so that they were enabled to perceive directly those realities which are beyond the reach of man's perception.

(290) Here the reference is to Nimrod the ruler of the land of Abrahams birth, Iraq. The event which is referred to here is not mentioned at all in the Bible. However, the whole story occurs in the Talmud and is largely in harmony with the Quranic version. In the Talmudic version it is said that the father of Abraham occupied the highest office in Nimrod's government. When Abraham denounced polytheism, preached the doctrine of the unity of God and smashed the idols of the temple, his own father lodged a complaint against him before the king. This was followed by a conversation which is mentioned here.

(291) The dispute was over the question: Whom did he acknowledge as his Lord? The reason why this dispute arose was that God had granted kingship to the remonstrator, namely Nimrod. In order to comprehend fully the nature of the dispute hinted at in these statements, it is necessary to bear in mind the following:

(1) All polytheistic societies from the earliest times till today share one characteristic: they acknowledge God to be the Lord of lords, the greatest of all deities. They are unwilling to acknowledge Him, however, as the only God, the only object of man's worship and service.

(2) Polytheists tend to divide godhead into two categories. One of these belongs to the supernatural stratum. The being invested with godhead at this stratum rules over the entire system of causation and is the one to whom man turns for the fulfilment of his needs and for solutions to his problems. With this godhead the polytheists associate spirits, angels, jinn, heavenly bodies and several other beings. To them they address their prayers. They regard them as the objects of their worship. It is at their altars that offerings and sacrifices are placed. The second

category of godhead belongs to the social and political stratum, and refers to the being who has the privilege of absolute sovereignty: the one who is entitled to make the rules of conduct for human life, the one who is entitled to unreserved obedience, the one who has unlimited authority to command in worldly matters. Polytheists of all ages have either wrested this godhead from God altogether, or they have had this godhead distributed, in addition to God, among many others such as royal dynastic, religious divines and the venerated personalities of society, whether they belonged to the past or to their own times. Many royal families have laid claim to godhead of the second category and, in order to consolidate their claim, they have pretended to be the offspring of gods in the former sense. In general there has been collusion between the religious and the ruling classes on this question.

(3) Nimrod's claim to godhead belong to this second category. He did not deny the existence of God, and he did not deny that He was the creator of the heavens and the earth, and that He alone governed the entire universe. Nimrod did not claim for himself that he held the reins of the entire realm of causation in his hands; he claimed rather that he was the absolute sovereign of Chaldea and its inhabitants, that in his realm his word was law, that there was no authority superior to his own to which he was answerable. Any Chaldeans who did not either acknowledge him to be his lord or took anyone other than him to be so, was a rebel and a traitor.

(4) Abraham asserted that he acknowledged none else but the creator of the universe as his God, the only object worthy of his worship. He also denied categorically the godhead and overlordship of anyone else. This raised the question of how far the new creed could be tolerated, in so far as it was opposed to the tenets of the national religion and rejected the current ideas regarding the deities it worshipped. It also alerted the establishment in so far as Abraham's ideas might constitute a serious threat to the national state and to the position and privilege of its ruling coterie.

(292) Even though it was clear from Abraham's very first sentence that none other than God could legitimately be regarded as the Lord, Nimrod resorted to an unreasonable reply. But Abraham's second statement left no room even for Nimrod's brazenness. He knew well enough that the sun and the moon were subjected to the overlordship of the same God as Abraham had acknowledged as his Lord. What, then, could he say in reply? To accept the Truth which Abraham had made crystal clear by his argument meant that Nimrod ought to part with his absolutist despotism. The devil within him was not prepared for that. Hence he was left wonderstruck, unable to get out of the darkness of self-adoration to the light of Truth. If he had taken God rather than the Evil One as his patron and supporter, the true path would have been opened to him after Abraham's preaching.

According to the Talmud, Abraham was interned in prison on the orders of this king. He remained in prison for ten days, after which the king decided to have him burnt alive. It was then that the famous incident of Abraham being thrown into the fire took place **see Quran (21:51 f f).; (29:16); (37:83**).

اَوۡ كَالَّذِىۡ مَرَّ عَلٰى قَرۡيَةٍ وَّهِىَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلٰى عُرُوۡشِهَا ۚ قَالَ اَنّٰى يُحۡىٖ هٰذِهِ اللّٰهُ بَعۡدَ مَوۡتِهَا ۚ فَاَمَاتَهُ اللّٰهُ مِائَةَ عَامٍ ثُمَّ بَعَثَهٗ ؕ قَالَ كَمۡ لَبِثۡتَ ؕ قَالَ لَبِثۡتُ يَوۡمًا اَوۡ بَعۡضَ يَوۡمٍ ؕ قَالَ بَلۡ لَّبِثۡتَ مِائَةَ عَامٍ فَانْظُرۡ اِلٰى طَعَامِكَ وَشَرَابِكَ لَمۡ يَتَسَنَّهۡ ۚ وَانْظُرۡ اِلٰى حِمَارِكَ وَلِنَجۡعَلَكَ اٰيَةً لِّلنَّاسِ ۚ وَانْظُرۡ اِلَى الۡعِظَامِ كَيۡفَ نُنۡشِزُهَا ثُمَّ نَكۡسُوۡهَا لَحۡمًا ؕ فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهٗ ۙ قَالَ اَعۡلَمُ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ قَدِيۡرٌ ۝

(2-259) Or consider him by way of example who passed by a town that was fallen down upon its turrets.[293] He exclaimed: “How will Allah restore life to this town that is now dead?” [294] Allah then caused him to remain dead for a hundred years and then raised him to life, and asked him: “How long did you remain in this state?” He replied: “I remained so for a day or a part of a day.” Allah rejoined: “No, you have rather stayed thus for a hundred years. But look at your food and your drink, there is no deterioration in them. And look at your ass (how its entire skeleton has rotted)! And We did all this so that We might make you a token of instruction for people. [295] And see how We will put

the bones (of the ass) together and will clothe them with flesh." Thus when the reality became clear to him, he said: "I know that Allah has power over everything."

(293) It is irrelevant to ask who the person was and the place where this incident occurred. The real purpose in mentioning this event is to show how God showed light to the one who had chosen God as his protector and supporter. As for determining the name of the person and the locality, we neither possess the means to do so, nor is such an endeavor in any way beneficial. What seems to be evident from the statement that follows is that the person concerned must necessarily have been a Prophet.

(294) This question does not signify that the person concerned denied or entertained any doubts regarding life after death. His enquiry merely indicates his wish to have direct knowledge of reality, like the Prophets of the past.

(295) The restoration of life to a man considered to have died a hundred years ago was in itself sufficient to make him, for his contemporaries, a living testimony.

وَاِذۡ قَالَ اِبۡرٰهٖمُ رَبِّ اَرِنِىۡ كَيۡفَ تُحۡىِ الۡمَوۡتٰىؕ قَالَ اَوَلَمۡ تُؤۡمِنۡ ؕ قَالَ بَلٰى وَلٰكِنۡ لِّيَطۡمَئِنَّ قَلۡبِىۡؕ قَالَ فَخُذۡ اَرۡبَعَةً مِّنَ الطَّيۡرِ فَصُرۡهُنَّ اِلَيۡكَ ثُمَّ اجۡعَلۡ عَلٰى كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِّنۡهُنَّ جُزۡءًا ثُمَّ ادۡعُهُنَّ يَاۡتِيۡنَكَ سَعۡيًا ؕ وَاعۡلَمۡ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيۡزٌ حَكِيۡمٌ ﴿۲۶۰﴾

(2-260) And recall when Abraham said: "My Lord, show me how You give life to the dead," Allah said: "Why! Do you have no faith?" Abraham replied: "Yes, but in order that my heart be at rest." (296) He said: "Then take four birds, and tame them to yourself, then put a part of them on every hill, and summon them; they will come to you flying. Know well that Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise." (297)

(296) That is, the rest and inner peace that one attains as a result of direct personal observation.

(297) People have subjected this incident and the one above to very strange interpretations. If one bears in mind, however, God's dealings with the Prophets, one will not feel any need to strain

one's energies in hammering out such artificially-contrived interpretations. The truth of the matter is that the kind of function that ordinary believers are required to perform requires of them no more than believing in certain truths without perceiving them through their senses. The function entrusted by God to the Prophets is such that they ought to have direct knowledge of the truths, the acceptance of which they are required to invite others to.

Thanks to the nature of their mission, the Prophets had to tell the world that while others resorted to conjecture and fancy, they spoke from personal direct observation and experience; that while others could claim to possess only imagination, they possessed reliable knowledge; that while others were blind, they alone had the God-given capacity to perceive the Truth. It is for this reason that the angels come to the Prophets and they see them with their own eyes. It is for the same reason that the Prophets were allowed a glimpse of the system of governance of the heavens and the earth. It is for the same reason, again, that they were enabled to observe Heaven and Hell and witness scenes of resurrection.

The Prophets are in possession of faith in the Unseen at the time they are invested with prophethood. After being designated to prophethood, they are further honoured by special favours and privileges, and initiated into what may be termed as 'faith in the seen' (for the 'Unseen' is changed for them to the 'seen'). This favour is a special prerogative of the Prophets. (**For a further explanation see (Surah 9, nn. 17, 18, 19 and 34.**)

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنبَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُنۢبُلَةٍ مِّائَةُ حَبَّةٍ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُضَاعِفُ لِمَن يَشَاءُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ۝

(2-261) The example of those [298] who spend their wealth in the Way of Allah [299] is like that of a grain of corn that sprouts seven ears, and in every ear there are a hundred grains. Thus Allah multiplies the action of whomsoever He wills. Allah is Munificent, All-Knowing. [300]

(298) Here the discourse turns to the subject touched upon in verses 244 ff. above. Believers were urged to sacrifice life and property for the sake of the great cause in which they believed. It is difficult, however, to persuade those whose standard of judgement in respect of economic matters has not completely changed, to rise above either personal or narrow group interests and dispense their wealth wholeheartedly for the sake of a righteous cause. People who have a materialistic outlook and whose life constitutes an uninterrupted pursuit of money, who adore every single penny they have, and who can never stop thinking about their balance sheets can never have the capacity to do anything really effective for the sake of higher ideals. When such people apparently do spend money for the sake of higher moral ideals, it is merely an outward act which is performed after carefully calculating the material benefits which are likely to accrue either to them, to their group or to their nation. With this outlook a person cannot go one step forward along the path of that religion which requires man to become indifferent to considerations of worldly profit and loss, and constantly to spend time, energy and money to make the Word of God reign supreme.

To follow such a course requires a moral outlook of an altogether different kind; it requires breadth of vision and magnanimity and, above all, an exclusive devotion to God. At the same time it requires that man's collective life should be so re-molded as to become conducive to the growth of the moral qualities mentioned above rather than to the growth of a materialistic outlook and behavior. Hence the three succeeding sections i.e. (**verses 261-81 - Ed**.)are devoted to enunciating instructions designed to foster such an outlook.

(299) A great many expenditures fall under the category of spending 'in the way of Allah', as long as this is done according to the laws of God and with the intention of seeking His good pleasure. This includes spending one's wealth to fulfil one's legitimate needs, to provide for one's family, to look after the needs of relatives, to help the needy and to contribute to the general welfare and to spread the true religion and so on.

(300) The greater the sincerity and the more intense the feeling with which one spends for the sake of God, the greater will be God's reward. It is not difficult at all for God, Who blesses a grain so that out of it seven hundred grains grow, to allow one's charity to grow in like manner so that the unit of money one spends will return seven hundred fold. This statement is followed by a mention of two of God's attributes. First is His munificence. His Hand is not clenched so as to restrain Him from recompensing man for his deeds to the fullest extent that he deserves. Second, God is All-Knowing. He is not unaware of what one spends and the spirit in which one spends. So there is no reason to fear that one will not receive one's due reward.

اَلَّذِيۡنَ يُنۡفِقُوۡنَ اَمۡوَالَهُمۡ فِىۡ سَبِيۡلِ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ لَا يُتۡبِعُوۡنَ مَاۤ اَنۡفَقُوۡا مَنًّا وَّلَاۤ اَذًى ۙ لَّهُمۡ اَجۡرُهُمۡ عِنۡدَ رَبِّهِمۡ ۚ وَلَا خَوۡفٌ عَلَيۡهِمۡ وَلَا هُمۡ يَحۡزَنُوۡنَ ۝

(2-262) Those who spend their wealth in the Way of Allah and do not follow up their spending by stressing their benevolence and causing hurt, will find their reward secure with their Lord. They have no cause for fear and grief. (301)

(301) They need not fear that they will not be amply rewarded or that they will have any reason to feel remorse for spending in the way of God.

قَوۡلٌ مَّعۡرُوۡفٌ وَّمَغۡفِرَةٌ خَيۡرٌ مِّنۡ صَدَقَةٍ يَّتۡبَعُهَاۤ اَذًى ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَنِىٌّ حَلِيۡمٌ ۝

(2-263) To speak a kind word and to forgive people’s faults is better than charity followed by hurt. Allah is All-Sufficient, All-Forbearing.(302)

(302) This implies two things. First, Allah does not stand in need of anybody's charity, for He is Self-Sufficient. Secondly, He likes those people who are generous and large-hearted, but does not like frivolous and narrow-minded people, for He Himself is Generous, Clement and Forbearing. How, then Allah, Who bestows on the people the necessities of life without stint, and

forgives and pardons them over and over again in spite of their errors, would like those who mar the self-respect of a person by sending repeated reminders of their charity and making pointed references to it even though they might have given only a farthing. A Tradition of the Holy Prophet says that on the Day of Resurrection, Allah will neither speak a word nor even so much as look at a person who makes pointed references to the gift he gave to some one.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا لَا تُبۡطِلُوۡا صَدَقٰتِكُمۡ بِالۡمَنِّ وَالۡاَذٰى ۙ كَالَّذِىۡ يُنۡفِقُ مَالَهٗ رِئَآءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤۡمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَالۡيَوۡمِ الۡاٰخِرِ ؕ فَمَثَلُهٗ كَمَثَلِ صَفۡوَانٍ عَلَيۡهِ تُرَابٌ فَاَصَابَهٗ وَابِلٌ فَتَرَكَهٗ صَلۡدًا ؕ لَا يَقۡدِرُوۡنَ عَلٰى شَىۡءٍ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوۡا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهۡدِى الۡقَوۡمَ الۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ ۝

(2-264) Believers! Do not nullify your acts of charity by stressing your benevolence and causing hurt as does he who spends his wealth only to be seen by people and does not believe in Allah and the Last Day. (303) The example of his spending is that of a rock with a thin coating of earth upon it: when a heavy rain smites it, the earth is washed away, leaving the rock bare; (304) such people derive no gain from their acts of charity. Allah does not set the deniers of the Truth on the Right Way.(305)

(303) The desire to display one's good deeds itself proves that the person concerned does not truly believe in God and the Hereafter. One who does good merely in order to impress people with his righteousness clearly regards those persons as his god. Such a person neither expects reward from God nor is he concerned that his good deeds will some day be reckoned to his credit.

(304) In this parable, 'heavy rain' signifies charity, and 'rock' the wicked intent and motive which lie behind external acts of charity. The expression, 'with a thin coating of earth upon it' signifies the external aspect of charity which conceals the wicked intent and motive of a man. These explanations make the significance and purport of the parable clear. The natural effect of rainfall should be the growth of plants and harvest. But if the

earth, which is the repository of fertility, is insignificant in quantity, for example only a coating of it on some rock, the result will be that instead of yielding any beneficial result the rainfall may even prove harmful. Similarly, charity has the capacity to generate goodness and benevolence in human beings. Man's potential for goodness, however, is conditional on sincerity. Devoid of that charity leads to sheer loss and waste.

(305) Here the term kafir is used in the sense of the ungrateful person who refuses to acknowledge benevolence. People who either make use of the bounties of God in order to seek the gratitude of God's creatures rather than God's good pleasure, or who spend on others and then hurt them by stressing their acts of benevolence and kindness, are ungrateful to God for His bounties and favours. Since such people do not seek to please God, God does not care to direct them to the way that leads to His good pleasure.

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِيۡنَ يُنۡفِقُوۡنَ اَمۡوَالَهُمُ ابۡتِغَآءَ مَرۡضَاتِ اللّٰهِ وَتَثۡبِيۡتًا مِّنۡ اَنۡفُسِهِمۡ كَمَثَلِ جَنَّةٍۢ بِرَبۡوَةٍ اَصَابَهَا وَابِلٌ فَاٰتَتۡ اُكُلَهَا ضِعۡفَيۡنِ ۚ فَاِنۡ لَّمۡ يُصِبۡهَا وَابِلٌ فَطَلٌّ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ بَصِيۡرٌ ۝

(2-265) The example of those who spend their wealth single-mindedly to please Allah is that of a garden on a high ground. If a heavy rain smites it, it brings forth its fruits twofold, and if there is no heavy rain, even a light shower suffices it. (306) Allah sees all that you do.

(306) 'Heavy rain' signifies here charity motivated by a high degree of benevolence and sincerity. 'Light shower' refers to charity deficient in sincerity and goodness, though not altogether devoid of them.

اَيَوَدُّ اَحَدُكُمۡ اَنۡ تَكُوۡنَ لَهٗ جَنَّةٌ مِّنۡ نَّخِيۡلٍ وَّاَعۡنَابٍ تَجۡرِىۡ مِنۡ تَحۡتِهَا الۡاَنۡهٰرُ لَهٗ فِيۡهَا مِنۡ كُلِّ الثَّمَرٰتِ ۙ وَاَصَابَهُ الۡكِبَرُ وَلَهٗ ذُرِّيَّةٌ ضُعَفَآءُ ۪ فَاَصَابَهَا اِعۡصَارٌ فِيۡهِ نَارٌ فَاحۡتَرَقَتۡ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَـكُمُ الۡاٰيٰتِ لَعَلَّكُمۡ تَتَفَكَّرُوۡنَ ۝

(2-266) Would any of you desire that he should have a garden of palms and vines with rivers flowing beneath it – a

garden in which he has every manner of fruit – and that it should then be struck by a fiery whirlwind and be utterly burnt down at a time when old age has overtaken him, and his offspring are still too small to look after their affairs? (307) Thus does Allah make His teachings clear to you that you may reflect.

(307) It is obvious that a man does not like to see the earnings of his lifetime destroyed in his old age, when he needs them badly and when he can no longer earn. How is it, then, that he can contemplate stepping into the realm of the Hereafter and finding suddenly that he is empty-handed; that he has sown nothing from which he can reap the fruit? In the Next World there will he no opportunity to begin earning anew. Whatever one can do towards ensuring one's well-being in the Hereafter must he done in this world. If one devotes oneself totally to the pursuit of the riches of this world rather than to the Hereafter, one's situation will be as pitiable as that of the age-stricken man whose orchard (his source of income in his old age) is reduced to ashes too late for him to produce a new one.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡۤا اَنۡفِقُوۡا مِنۡ طَيِّبٰتِ مَا كَسَبۡتُمۡ وَمِمَّاۤ اَخۡرَجۡنَا لَـكُمۡ مِّنَ الۡاَرۡضِ ۫ وَلَا تَيَمَّمُوا الۡخَبِيۡثَ مِنۡهُ تُنۡفِقُوۡنَ وَلَسۡتُمۡ بِاٰخِذِيۡهِ اِلَّاۤ اَنۡ تُغۡمِضُوۡا فِيۡهِ ؕ وَاعۡلَمُوۡۤا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ غَنِىٌّ حَمِيۡدٌ ۝

(2-267) Believers! Spend (in the Way of Allah) out of the good things you have earned and out of what We have produced for you from the earth, and choose not for your spending the bad things such as you yourselves would not accept or accept only by overlooking its defects. Know well that Allah is All-Munificent, Most Praiseworthy. (308)

(308) It is obvious that He Who is invested with the best attributes cannot be appreciative of those possessed of low and evil qualities. God is, for instance, Generous and Beneficent, and constantly showers His favours and bounties on His creatures. How is it possible for Him, then, to love those who are mean, niggardly and vicious?

اَلشَّيۡطٰنُ يَعِدُكُمُ الۡـفَـقۡرَ وَيَاۡمُرُكُمۡ بِالۡفَحۡشَآءِ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ يَعِدُكُمۡ مَّغۡفِرَةً مِّنۡهُ وَفَضۡلًا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيۡمٌ ۝

(2-268) Satan frightens you with poverty and bids you to commit indecency whereas Allah promises you His forgiveness and bounty. Allah is Munificent, All-Knowing.

يُؤۡتِى الۡحِكۡمَةَ مَنۡ يَّشَآءُ ۚ وَمَنۡ يُّؤۡتَ الۡحِكۡمَةَ فَقَدۡ اُوۡتِىَ خَيۡرًا كَثِيۡرًا ؕ وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ اِلَّاۤ اُولُوا الۡاَلۡبَابِ ۝

(2-269) He grants wisdom to those whom He wills; and whoever is granted wisdom has indeed been granted much good. (309) Yet none except people of understanding take heed.

(309) 'Wisdom' signifies sound perception and sound judgement. The purpose of this statement is to point out that one who is possessed of wisdom will follow God's path rather than that of Satan. The followers of Satan believe that it is the height of wisdom and shrewdness to be constantly concerned with saving out of one's earnings, and to be perpetually on the look-out for higher income. But for those endowed with Divine perception such an attitude is sheer folly. True wisdom consists in using one's resource moderately to meet one's needs and in spending whatever is left for charitable purposes. It may be possible for a person who does not spend for charitable purposes to attain a much greater degree of worldly prosperity than others. The life of this world, however, is only a fraction of man's total life which is not limited to the confines of this world. One who risks the well-being of his eternal existence for the sake of highly transient well-being in this world is indeed a fool. The truly wise person is he who makes full use of the tenure of this life and invests his resources in prosperity in this life that will never cease.

وَمَاۤ اَنۡفَقۡتُمۡ مِّنۡ نَّفَقَةٍ اَوۡ نَذَرۡتُمۡ مِّنۡ نَّذۡرٍ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعۡلَمُهٗ ؕ وَمَا لِلظّٰلِمِيۡنَ مِنۡ اَنۡصَارٍ ۝

(2-270) Allah knows whatever you spend or whatever you vow (to spend). The wrong-doers have none to succor them. [310]

(310) Whether or not a man spends in the way of God, and whether or not he vows to spend in the way of God, God is fully aware both of his intentions and deeds. All those who either spend for the sake of God or vow to spend for the sake of God will be adequately rewarded. As for those who have either spent or have vowed to spend for others than God, no one will save them from God's chastisement.

'Vow' means either a man's pledge to spend something or to perform some act of goodness which is not obligatory on him providing a particular wish of his is fulfilled. Provided that this vow is related to some wish which is in itself permissible and good and that the person concerned makes it to none but God and for the sake of God, then such a vow will be reckoned as an act of obedience to God and its fulfilment will be worthy of reward. Otherwise such a vow will be seen as an act of disobedience and sin and its fulfilment will invite punishment from God.

إِن تُبْدُوا الصَّدَقَٰتِ فَنِعِمَّا هِىَ ۖ وَإِن تُخْفُوهَا وَتُؤْتُوهَا ٱلْفُقَرَآءَ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ۚ وَيُكَفِّرُ عَنكُم مِّن سَيِّـَٔاتِكُمْ ۗ وَٱللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿٢٧١﴾

(2-271) If you dispense your charity publicly, it is well; but if you conceal it and pay it to the needy in secret, it will be even better for you. [311] This will atone for several of your misdeeds. [312] Allah is well aware of all that you do.

(311) If charity is of an obligatory nature it is preferable to dispense it openly. Non-obligatory charity should preferably be dispensed secretly. This principle applies to all acts. As a rule, it is more meritorious to perform obligatory acts openly and non-obligatory acts of goodness, secretly .

(312) The performance of good deeds in secret leads to the continual improvement of one's life and character. One's good qualities develop fully and one's bad qualities gradually wither

away. This makes a man so acceptable to God that He pardons the sins that he might have committed.

لَيۡسَ عَلَيۡكَ هُدٰىهُمۡ وَلٰـكِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَهۡدِىۡ مَنۡ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَمَا تُنۡفِقُوۡا مِنۡ خَيۡرٍ فَلِاَنۡفُسِكُمۡ ؕ وَمَا تُنۡفِقُوۡنَ اِلَّا ابۡتِغَآءَ وَجۡهِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَمَا تُنۡفِقُوۡا مِنۡ خَيۡرٍ يُّوَفَّ اِلَيۡكُمۡ وَاَنۡتُمۡ لَا تُظۡلَمُوۡنَ ۝

(2-272) You are not responsible for setting these people on the Right Way; Allah sets on the Right Way whomsoever He wills. Whatever wealth you spend in charity is to your own benefit for you spend merely to please Allah. So, whatever you spend in charity will be repaid to you in full and you shall not be wronged. (313)

(313) In the beginning Muslims tended to hesitate in helping either their non-Muslim relatives or other non-Muslims who were in need. They thought that helping Muslims only constituted 'spending in the way of Allah'. This verse rejects this attitude. The purpose of this verse is to point out that Muslims are not responsible for forcing true guidance down the throats of people; conveying the message of Truth to people absolves them of the obligation incumbent upon them. It is, then, for God either to favour the recipients of the message with true perception or not. In addition Muslims should not shrink from helping their relatives in the affairs of the world on the ground that they are not following the true guidance; they will he rewarded by God for whatever help they render to needy persons for the sake of God.

لِلۡفُقَرَآءِ الَّذِيۡنَ اُحۡصِرُوۡا فِىۡ سَبِيۡلِ اللّٰهِ لَا يَسۡتَطِيۡعُوۡنَ ضَرۡبًا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ ۟ يَحۡسَبُهُمُ الۡجَاهِلُ اَغۡنِيَآءَ مِنَ التَّعَفُّفِ ۚ تَعۡرِفُهُمۡ بِسِيۡمٰهُمۡ ۚ لَا يَسۡـَٔـلُوۡنَ النَّاسَ اِلۡحَافًا ؕ وَمَا تُنۡفِقُوۡا مِنۡ خَيۡرٍ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِهٖ عَلِيۡمٌ ۝

(2-273) Those needy ones who are wholly wrapped up in the cause of Allah, and who are hindered from moving about the earth in search of their livelihood, especially deserve help. He who is unaware of their circumstances supposes them to be wealthy because of their dignified bearing, but you will know them by their

countenance, although they do not go about begging of people with importunity. Whatever wealth you spend on helping them, Allah will know of it. (314)

(314) The people referred to here are those who, because they had dedicated themselves wholly to serving the religion of God, were unable to earn their livelihood. In the time of the Prophet there was a group of such volunteer workers, known as Ashab al-Suffah, consisting of about three or four hundred people who had forsaken their homes and gone to Madinah. They remained at all times in the company, of the Prophet, always at his beck and call to perform whatever service he required of them. They were dispatched by the Prophet on whatever expeditions he wished. Whenever there was nothing to do elsewhere, they stayed in Madinah and devoted themselves to acquiring religious knowledge and imparting it to others. Since they were full-time workers and had no private resources to meet their needs, God pointed out to the Muslims that helping such people was the best way of 'spending in the way of Allah'.

اَلَّذِيۡنَ يُنۡفِقُوۡنَ اَمۡوَالَهُمۡ بِالَّيۡلِ وَالنَّهَارِ سِرًّا وَّعَلَانِيَةً فَلَهُمۡ اَجۡرُهُمۡ عِنۡدَ رَبِّهِمۡ ۚ وَلَا خَوۡفٌ عَلَيۡهِمۡ وَلَا هُمۡ يَحۡزَنُوۡنَ ۝٢٧٤

(2-274) Those who spend their wealth by night and by day, secretly and publicly, will find that their reward is secure with their Lord and that there is no reason for them to entertain any fear or grief.

اَلَّذِيۡنَ يَاۡكُلُوۡنَ الرِّبٰوا لَا يَقُوۡمُوۡنَ اِلَّا كَمَا يَقُوۡمُ الَّذِىۡ يَتَخَبَّطُهُ الشَّيۡطٰنُ مِنَ الۡمَسِّ ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمۡ قَالُوۡۤا اِنَّمَا الۡبَيۡعُ مِثۡلُ الرِّبٰوا ۘ وَاَحَلَّ اللّٰهُ الۡبَيۡعَ وَحَرَّمَ الرِّبٰوا ؕ فَمَنۡ جَآءَهٗ مَوۡعِظَةٌ مِّنۡ رَّبِّهٖ فَانۡتَهٰى فَلَهٗ مَا سَلَفَ ؕ وَاَمۡرُهٗۤ اِلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ وَمَنۡ عَادَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ اَصۡحٰبُ النَّارِ ۚ هُمۡ فِيۡهَا خٰلِدُوۡنَ ۝٢٧٥

(2-275) As for those who devour interest, (315) they behave as the one whom Satan has confounded with his touch. (316) Seized in this state they say: “Buying and selling is but a kind of interest,” (317) even though Allah has made buying and selling lawful, and interest unlawful. (318) Hence, he who receives this

admonition from his Lord, and then gives up (dealing in interest), may keep his previous gains, and it will be for Allah to judge him. (319) As for those who revert to it, they are the people of the Fire, and in it shall they abide.

(315) The term riba in Arabic means 'to grow, to exceed, to increase'. Technically, it denotes the amount that a lender receives from a borrower at a fixed rate of interest. At the time of the revelation of the Quran several forms of interest transactions were in vogue and were designated as riba by the Arabs. Of these one was that the vendor sold an article and fixed a time limit for the payment of the price, stipulating that if the buyer failed to pay within the specified period of time, he would extend the time limit but increase the price of the article. Another was that a man loaned a sum of money to another person and stipulated that the borrower should return a specified amount in excess of the amount loaned within a given time limit. A third form of interest transaction was that the borrower and vendor agreed that the former would repay the loan within a certain limit at a fixed rate of interest, and that if he failed to do so within the limit, the lender would extend the time limit, but at the same time would increase the rate of interest. It is to transactions such as these that the injunctions mentioned here apply.

(316) The Arabs used the word majnun (possessed by the jinn) to characterize the insane. The Quran uses the same expression about those who take interest. Just as an insane person, unconstrained by ordinary reason, resorts to all kinds of immoderate acts, so does one who takes interest. He pursues his craze for money as if he were insane. He is heedless of the fact that interest cuts the very roots of human love, brotherhood and fellow-feeling, and undermines the welfare and happiness of human society, and that his enrichment is at the expense of the well-being of many other human beings. This is the state of his 'insanity' in this world: since a man will rise in the Hereafter in the same state in which he dies in the present world, he will be resurrected as a lunatic.

(317) The unsoundness of this view lies in not differentiating between the profit one gains on investment in commercial

enterprises on the one hand, and interest on the other. As a result of this confusion, the proponents of this view argue that if profit on money invested in a business enterprise is permissible, why should the profit accruing on loaned money be deemed unlawful? Similar arguments are advanced by those who thrive on interest in our own times. Their argument runs as follows: A person who could have profitably invested his money in a commercial enterprise loans it out to somebody who, in turn, makes a profit out of it. In such circumstances why should the borrower not pay the lender a part of the profit? Such people, however, disregard the fact that no enterprise in which a man participates, whether it is commercial, industrial or agricultural, and whether one participates in it with one's organizing skill or capital, or by both, is immune from risk. No enterprise carries absolutely guaranteed profit at a fixed rate. What is the justification, then, for the fact that out of all the people in the business world, the financier alone should be considered entitled to a profit at a fixed rate in all circumstances, and should be protected against all possibility of loss?

Let us set aside for a moment the questions of non-profitable loans and vacillations in the rate of profit. Let us consider only the question of loans for profitable enterprises, and confine our consideration to loans made at non-exorbitant rates of interest. The question, however, remains: Which rational principle, which logic, which canon of justice and which sound economic principle can justify that those who spend their time, energy, capacity and resources, and whose effort and skill make a business thrive, are not guaranteed profit at any fixed rate, whereas those who merely lend out their funds are fully secured against all risks of loss and are guaranteed profit at a fixed rate? And which principle can justify the fact that a man lends out his funds to an industrial concern and fixes, say for the next twenty years, that he will be entitled to receive each year a given per cent interest on his capital, while the proprietors of the industrial concern have no means of foretelling the price changes affecting their commodity, and hence their profit? Let us consider another case, namely that of war loans. How can it be appropriate that all classes of people endure all kinds of losses and are exposed to all

kinds of risks and dangers connected with war, whereas the financiers, simply by having made loans, continue to receive Interest on them for long periods of time, sometimes even for a whole century?

(318) The essential difference between non-interest business transactions and interest-bearing transactions rests on the following grounds:

(1) In ordinary business transactions there occurs a mutually equitable exchange of benefits between the buyer and the seller. The buyer derives benefit from the article which he purchases from the seller; the seller receives compensation for the effort, ingenuity and time spent on making the article available to the buyer. In interest-bearing transactions, on the other hand, the exchange of benefits does not take place equitably. The interest receiving party, receives a fixed amount as a payment for using the loan he advances and thus his gain is secured. The other party to the transaction has only one thing at his disposal - a period of time during which he can make use of the funds loaned, and which may not always yield a profit. If such a person spends the borrowed funds on consumption, there is obviously no question of profit. Even if the funds are invested in trade, agriculture or industry, one stands the chance both of making a profit and of incurring a loss during the period of time in question. Hence an interest-bearing transaction entails either a loss on one side and a profit on the other, or an assured and fixed profit on one side and an uncertain and unspecified profit on the other.

(2) In business enterprises the profit that a person makes, however large it may be, is made only once. The person who lends out money on interest receives, on the contrary, an on-going profit which multiplies with the passage of time. Moreover, however large the extent of the profit made by the borrower from the loaned money it will still be within certain limits, while the claims of the lender in return for this profit are unlimited. It is even possible that the lender may seize the entire turnover of the borrower if he defaults on payment, thus depriving him of all the resources from which he makes his living. It is also possible that

even after the lender has seized all the property of the borrower, his claims will still remain unsatisfied.

(3) In a business deal, the transaction ends with the exchange between a commodity and its price. After this exchange has taken place, no obligation remains on either party towards the other. If the transaction is that of rent, the thing rented (e.g. land or building) is not consumed but is rather used and remains intact, and is returned to the owner after a stipulated period of time. In a transaction involving interest, however, what actually happens is that the borrower first spends the loaned funds, then reclaims them with his efforts, returning them to the lender together with a surplus.

(4) In agriculture and industry, and in trade and commerce, one makes a profit after having expended one's effort, intelligence and time. In an interest-bearing transaction, on the contrary, one becomes entitled to a sizeable share in the earnings of others without any toil and effort, by merely allowing someone to make use of one's surplus money. The lender is neither a 'partner' in the technical sense of the term, for he does not share both the profit and the loss, nor is his share in proportion to the actual profit.

There is thus a tremendous difference from an economic point of view between business transactions as such and interest-bearing transactions. Whereas the former plays a highly constructive role in human society, the latter leads to its corrosion. This is in addition to its moral implications. By its very nature interest breeds meanness, selfishness, apathy and cruelty towards others. It leads to the worship of money and destroys fellow-feeling and a spirit of altruistic co-operation between man and man. Thus it is ruinous for mankind from both an economic and a moral viewpoint.

(319) What is said here is not that man will be pardoned by God for the interest taken in the past, but that it is for God to judge him. The expression: 'may keep his previous gains' does not signify absolute pardon from God for the interest one has taken,

rather it points to the legal concession that has been made. It only means that no legal claim will be made for the interest taken in the past. For were such claims to be entertained, an endless succession of litigation would ensue. From a moral point of view, however, the earnings made by way of interest would continue to be impure. If a person is really God-fearing and if his economic and moral viewpoint has really undergone a change under the influence of Islam, he will try to abstain from spending on himself the income which he has obtained by illegitimate means. He will also try to seek out those from whom he has derived illegitimate earnings and will try to return those earnings to such people; if he is unable to locate them, he will try to spend them on collective welfare rather than on himself. It is this conduct alone which can save him from the punishment of God. As for one who continues to enjoy his illegitimate earnings, it is not unlikely that he will be subjected to God's punishment.

♦۞ يَمْحَقُ اللّٰهُ الرِّبٰوا وَيُرْبِى الصَّدَقٰتِ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ كَفَّارٍ اَثِيْمٍ

(2-276) Allah deprives interest of all blessing, whereas He blesses charity with growth. (320) Allah loves none who is ungrateful and persists in sin. (321)

(320) The fact stated in this verse is a truism from a moral and spiritual as well as from an economic and social viewpoint. For, although wealth apparently multiplies through interest and shrinks as a result of charity, in actual fact the opposite is the case. By God's decree, the law of nature is such that interest not only serves as a strain on moral and spiritual well-being, and social and economic growth, it also causes actual regression and decline. Charity, however, (including such acts as lending money to people with the stipulation that they should return it if they can. and at their convenience) leads to the growth and expansion of man's moral and spiritual qualities and to the growth of human society and economy.

Looked at from moral and spiritual standpoints, it is evident that interest is not only the outcome of selfishness,

miserliness and callousness but also encourages their growth. Charity, on the other hand, is the outcome of generosity, compassion, large -heartedness and magnanimity, with the result that the more one practices charity the more these qualities develop. It is obvious that if there is a society whose individuals are selfish in their dealings with one another, in which none is prepared to assist the other without self-interest, in which every person considers the other's need an opportunity to capitalize and exploit, in which the interests of the rich are directly opposed to the interests of the common people, that society does not rest on stable foundations. In such a society, instead of love and compassion there is bound to grow mutual spite and bitterness, apathy, indifference and callousness. The elements which compose such a society are bound to remain inclined towards disintegration and chaos; acute internal conflict and strife are sure to occur.

Contrast this with the society which is based on mutual sympathy and co-operation, whose individuals deal with one another magnanimously, in which, when a person is in need, people willingly come forward to accord generous help, in which the 'haves' assist the 'have-nots' with compassion and at least engage in just and equitable co-operation. In such a society mutual cordiality. goodwill and fellow-feeling are bound to flourish. The various components of such a society will be closely knit together and prove a source of mutual support. In such a society internal conflict and strife will make few inroads. Also, owing to mutual co-operation and goodwill the pace of development should be faster than in the other kind of society.

Let us now look at the matter from an economic viewpoint, from which interest- bearing loans are seen to be of two kinds. The first category, consists of loans incurred by people in genuine need, who are compelled to borrow for their personal consumption requirements. The second consists of the loans incurred by businessmen for investment in trade and industry or agriculture.

The first category is generally acknowledged to lead to ruin. Nevertheless, there is not one country in the world where

financiers and financial institutions are not sucking the blood of poor laborers, peasants and ordinary low-income people through interest on consumption loans. The burden of interest makes it extremely difficult, often impossible, for borrowers to pay off the original loan. They may even have to resort to fresh borrowing from elsewhere to pay if off. Because of the way interest works, the sum outstanding against them often remains even after they, have paid twice or three times its amount in interest. The bulk of the income of laborers is snatched away from them by lenders, leaving them without enough for the bare necessities of life for themselves and their families. This situation steadily erodes their interest in their jobs. For if someone else is to reap the benefit of a man's hard work, why should he work hard at all? Moreover, oppressed by the worries of debt, the health and strength of laborers is gradually destroyed by undernourishment and lack of medical treatment.

In short, a minority of people continually fatten themselves by sucking the blood of millions of ordinary people, but the total production level of the people remains much lower than its optimum potential. Ultimately, of course, these exploiters are seldom spared the evil consequences of their actions. Their callous selfishness causes such widespread misery among the masses that anger and resentment against the rich shoulder in their hearts ready to erupt in times of revolutionary unrest. The exploiters then have to pay very dearly: their ill-earned riches are not only wrested from them, they are either killed mercilessly or subjected to ignominy and humiliation.

The second category of loans, those invested in productive enterprises, also cause harm because of the infliction of a predetermined rate of interest on such borrowings. The most significant are the following:

(1) Projects which do not promise a higher rate of profit than the current rate of interest fail to attract sufficient funds, no matter how useful and necessary they may, be from the viewpoint of larger national interests. Loanable funds flow towards those business enterprises which are likely to yield at least the same, if not a higher rate of profit on investments than

the current rate of interest, even though they may be of very little or no benefit to the nation at large.

(2) There can be no guarantee that a business investment, whether it is in trade, industry or agriculture, will always yield a rate of profit which is higher than the rate of interest. Not only can there be no such assurance, there can never be an assurance about any business that it will always remain profitable. What really happens, therefore, is that the financier is assured interest at a predetermined rate whereas the business in which the loan is invested is exposed to risk and possible losses.

(3) Since the lender does not share the profit and loss of the business but lends out funds on the assurance of a fixed rate of interest, he is in no way concerned with the fortunes of the business itself. He is solely concerned, and in a totally selfish spirit, with his own pecuniary benefit. Hence, whenever the lender senses the faintest sign of depression, he begins to withdraw money from the market. The result is that sometimes imaginary fears and anxieties spark off an actual depression in the economy. And if the economy is depressed owing to other factors, the excessive selfishness of the financiers tends to escalate the situation into a full-scale economic crisis. These three evils of interest are obvious to every student of economics. Can anyone then deny the truth of the Natural law, enunciated by Allah that interest decreases the national economic wealth?

Let us now look at the economic effects of charity. Suppose the general attitude of the prosperous members of a society, is that within the limits of their means they spend generously on the fulfilment of their own requirements and on the requirements of their family, and then devote the surplus to helping the poor. After that they, either use their funds to provide interest-free loans to businessmen, invest them in business with the stipulation that they shall be co-sharers in both the profit and loss of the business, or deposit them with the government so that it may use them on projects of public welfare. A little reflection will make it obvious that trade, industry, and agriculture in such a

society, will attain maximum prosperity; the standard of living of its people will continually rise and production in it will be much higher than in societies where economic activity is fettered by interest.

(321) It is clear that only those who have a surplus of earnings over their basic requirements can lend out money at interest. This surplus, according to the Quran, constitutes God's bounty. And true thankfulness for this bounty requires that a person should be bountiful towards other creatures of God even as the Creator has been to him. If, instead of doing this, the person tries to become richer at the expense of those whose present earnings are insufficient to meet their needs, he is at once guilty of ungratefulness to God, and blatantly unjust, cruel and wicked.

اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَاَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَوُا الزَّكٰوةَ لَهُمۡ اَجۡرُهُمۡ عِنۡدَ رَبِّهِمۡ ۚ وَلَا خَوۡفٌ عَلَيۡهِمۡ وَلَا هُمۡ يَحۡزَنُوۡنَ ۝

(2-277) Truly the reward of those who believe and do righteous deeds and establish Prayer and pay Zakah is with their Lord; they have no reason to entertain any fear or grief. (322)

(322) In this section God brings into sharp relief two contrasting characters. One is selfish, Mammon-worshipping, a kind of Shylock. He is totally preoccupied with making and accumulating money in total disregard of his obligations to God and his fellow-beings. He counts the money he has saved and is so consumed by the desire to see it multiply that he spends much time estimating how much it will grow in the weeks, months and years to come. The other character is a God-worshipping, generous and compassionate person, ever conscious of the claims of both God and man, ready to spend whatever he earns by the sweat of his brow on himself as well as on other human beings, and devotes a good part of it to philanthropic purposes.

The first character is strongly denounced by God. No healthy society can exist on the basis of such men, and in the Hereafter, too, they are destined to meet grief and affliction,

torment and misery. The latter, by contrast, is a character highly extolled by God, a character which will serve as the basis of a sound and healthy society in this world and will lead man to salvation in the Next.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَذَرُوْا مَا بَقِيَ مِنَ الرِّبٰوٓا اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٢٧٨﴾

(2-278) Believers! Have fear of Allah and give up all outstanding interest if you do truly believe.

فَاِنْ لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوْا فَاْذَنُوْا بِحَرْبٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ ۚ وَاِنْ تُبْتُمْ فَلَكُمْ رُءُوْسُ اَمْوَالِكُمْ ۚ لَا تَظْلِمُوْنَ وَلَا تُظْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٢٧٩﴾

(2-279) But if you fail to do so, then be warned of war from Allah and His Messenger.[323] If you repent even now, you have the right of the return of your capital; neither will you do wrong nor will you be wronged.

(323) This verse was revealed after the conquest of Makka and has been placed here because of its contextual relevance. Although interest was considered objectionable earlier, it had not been legally prohibited. After the revelation of this verse interest-bearing transactions became a punishable offence within the realm of Islam. The Prophet (peace he on him) warned the Arab tribes through his officials that war would be declared against them if they did not give up interest-bearing transactions. It was specified, for instance, in the agreement under which the Christians of Najran were granted internal autonomy under the suzerainty of the Islamic state, that if they continued to use interest, the agreement with them would be considered void and their action an act of belligerency. On the basis of the last words of the verse, Ibn 'Abbas, Hasan al-Baari, Ibn Sirin and Rabi' ibn Anas are of the view that anyone who takes interest within the boundaries of the Islamic State (Dar al-Islam) should be pressed to repudiate the transaction and recant and, if he persists, should be put to death. Others consider it sufficient to imprison such people and keep them in prison until they pledge to give up taking interest. (**See Jassas's commentary, on verse 2- 278; see especially vol. 1, pp. 471 f. - Ed**.)

وَاِنۡ كَانَ ذُوۡ عُسۡرَةٍ فَنَظِرَةٌ اِلٰى مَيۡسَرَةٍ ؕ وَاَنۡ تَصَدَّقُوۡا خَيۡرٌ لَّكُمۡ اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ
تَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ۝٢٨٠

(2-280) But if the debtor is in straitened circumstance, let him have respite until the time of ease; and whatever you remit by way of charity is better for you, if only you know.(324)

(324) This verse is the basis of the Islamic regulation that if a person has become incapable of paying off his debt, the court will force the creditors to grant him respite for payment. In fact, under certain circumstances, the court is entitled to remit a part of his debt and, at times, the whole of it. It is mentioned in the Hadith that once a person suffered loss in his trade and became greatly burdened with debt and the case was brought to the notice of the Prophet. The Prophet urged the people to help their brother in his distress. They came to his assistance but the amount of help was not enough to wipe out his debts. Then the Prophet approached the lenders and asked them to accept whatever amount was available and to grant remission to the borrower because of his inability to make further payments. Muslim jurists have made it clear that a debtor's residential house, eating utensils, clothes and the tools which he uses for earning his livelihood may not be confiscated in any, circumstances whatsoever for non-payment of loans. (**For relevant discussion and textual evidence see the commentaries on this verse in Ibn Kathir, Jassas, and Qurtubi - Ed**.)

وَاتَّقُوۡا يَوۡمًا تُرۡجَعُوۡنَ فِيۡهِ اِلَى اللّٰهِ ۗ ثُمَّ تُوَفّٰى كُلُّ نَفۡسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتۡ وَهُمۡ لَا
يُظۡلَمُوۡنَ ۝٢٨١

(2-281) And have fear of the Day when you shall return to Allah, and every human being shall be fully repaid for whatever (good or evil) he has done, and none shall be wronged.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡۤا اِذَا تَدَايَنۡتُمۡ بِدَيۡنٍ اِلٰۤى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى فَاكۡتُبُوۡهُ ؕ وَلۡيَكۡتُبۡ بَّيۡنَكُمۡ كَاتِبٌۢ
بِالۡعَدۡلِ ۪ وَلَا يَاۡبَ كَاتِبٌ اَنۡ يَّكۡتُبَ كَمَا عَلَّمَهُ اللّٰهُ فَلۡيَكۡتُبۡ ۚ وَلۡيُمۡلِلِ الَّذِىۡ عَلَيۡهِ
الۡحَـقُّ وَلۡيَتَّقِ اللّٰهَ رَبَّهٗ وَلَا يَبۡخَسۡ مِنۡهُ شَيۡـئًا ؕ فَاِنۡ كَانَ الَّذِىۡ عَلَيۡهِ الۡحَـقُّ سَفِيۡهًا اَوۡ
ضَعِيۡفًا اَوۡ لَا يَسۡتَطِيۡعُ اَنۡ يُّمِلَّ هُوَ فَلۡيُمۡلِلۡ وَلِيُّهٗ بِالۡعَدۡلِ ؕ وَاسۡتَشۡهِدُوۡا شَهِيۡدَيۡنِ مِنۡ

رِّجَالِكُمْ ۚ فَاِنْ لَّمْ يَكُوْنَا رَجُلَيْنِ فَرَجُلٌ وَّامْرَاَتٰنِ مِمَّنْ تَرْضَوْنَ مِنَ الشُّهَدَآءِ اَنْ تَضِلَّ اِحْدٰىهُمَا فَتُذَكِّرَ اِحْدٰىهُمَا الْاُخْرٰى ۚ وَلَا يَاْبَ الشُّهَدَآءُ اِذَا مَا دُعُوْا ۚ وَلَا تَسْـَٔـُوْٓا اَنْ تَكْتُبُوْهُ صَغِيْرًا اَوْ كَبِيْرًا اِلٰٓى اَجَلِهٖ ۚ ذٰلِكُمْ اَقْسَطُ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَاَقْوَمُ لِلشَّهَادَةِ وَاَدْنٰٓى اَلَّا تَرْتَابُوْٓا اِلَّآ اَنْ تَكُوْنَ تِجَارَةً حَاضِرَةً تُدِيْرُوْنَهَا بَيْنَكُمْ فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ اَلَّا تَكْتُبُوْهَا ۚ وَاَشْهِدُوْٓا اِذَا تَبَايَعْتُمْ ۪ وَلَا يُضَآرَّ كَاتِبٌ وَّلَا شَهِيْدٌ ۭ وَاِنْ تَفْعَلُوْا فَاِنَّهٗ فُسُوْقٌۢ بِكُمْ ۭ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ۭ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ اللّٰهُ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ❶❶❶❶♦

(2-282) Believers! Whenever you contract a debt from one another [325] for a known term, commit it to writing. [326] Let a scribe write it down between you justly, and the scribe may not refuse to write it down according to what Allah has taught him; so let him write, and let the debtor dictate; and let him fear Allah, his Lord, and curtail no part of it. If the debtor be feebleminded, weak, or incapable of dictating, let his guardian dictate equitably, and call upon two of your men as witnesses; [327] but if two men are not there, then let there be one man and two women as witnesses from among those acceptable to you [328] so that if one of the two women should fail to remember, the other might remind her. Let not the witnesses refuse when they are summoned (to give evidence). Do not show slackness in writing down the transaction, whether small or large, along with the term of its payment. That is fairest in the sight of Allah; it is best for testimony and is more likely to exclude all doubts. If it be a matter of buying and selling on the spot, it is not blameworthy if you do not write it down; [329] but do take witnesses when you settle commercial transactions with one another. And the scribe or the witness may be done no harm. [330] It will be sinful if you do so. Beware of the wrath of Allah. He teaches you the Right Way and has full knowledge of everything.

(325) This is the basis of the rule that the time for the repayment of a loan should be fixed at the time when the loan is transacted.

(326) When friends and relatives borrow from one another it is generally considered unseemly either to commit these loans to

writing, or to have them attested by witnesses. Such an act is considered a sign of distrust. But God enjoins that whenever loans or business transactions take place, their conditions should be recorded in black and white and should be attested by witnesses so that there remains no ground for misunderstanding or dispute. It is mentioned in the Hadith that three kinds of people who air their grievances to God go unheeded. The first is the man who does not divorce his wife despite her being of bad character. The second is the guardian of the orphan who hands over the latter's property to him before his having attained the age of majority. The third is he who loans out his money to a person without making anyone a witness to that transaction. (**Cited by Jassas. Ahkam al-Quran, vol. 1, p. 481; also Ibn Kathir, in commentary on 4: 5, citing this as a Tradition from Abu Musa al-Ash'ari mentioned bv Ibn Jarir al-Tabari - Ed**.)

(327) That is, from among Muslim males. This shows that wherever one has a choice, one should appoint only Muslims as one's witnesses. In the case of non-Muslim subjects of the Islamic State (ahl al-Dhimmah), however, they may appoint witnesses from among themselves.

(328) What is implied is that every Tom, Dick or Harry is not worthy of acting as a witness. Rather, persons of high integrity enjoying public credibility should be appointed as witnesses.

(329) The purpose of this directive is to stress that it is better for even day-to-day sales to be written down, as has become customary nowadays (viz. the issuance of invoices). Such a procedure, however, has not been made obligatory. Likewise, it is not objectionable if neighboring shopkeepers do not record the frequent transactions that take place between them.

(330) This means that no person should be compelled to write the document or be its witness. It also means that no party of a dispute should persecute either a scribe or witness for witnessing against the interests of that party.

وَاِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ عَلٰى سَفَرٍ وَّلَمۡ تَجِدُوۡا كَاتِبًا فَرِهٰنٌ مَّقۡبُوۡضَةٌ ؕ فَاِنۡ اَمِنَ بَعۡضُكُمۡ بَعۡضًا فَلۡيُؤَدِّ الَّذِى اؤۡتُمِنَ اَمَانَتَهٗ وَلۡيَتَّقِ اللّٰهَ رَبَّهٗ ؕ وَلَا تَكۡتُمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ ؕ وَمَنۡ يَّكۡتُمۡهَا فَاِنَّهٗۤ اٰثِمٌ قَلۡبُهٗ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ عَلِيۡمٌ ۝

(2-283) And if you are on a journey and do not find a scribe to write the document then resort to taking pledges in hand. (331) But if any of you trusts another, let him who is trusted, fulfil the trust and fear Allah, his Lord.
And do not conceal what you have witnessed, (332) for whoever conceals it, his heart is sinful. Allah has full knowledge of all that you do.

(331) This does not mean that pledge transactions are confined to journeys alone. These transactions have been specially mentioned in the context of journeys because during journeys people often have to resort to pledge transactions. Moreover, it has not been laid down that pledge transactions may be entered into only when a scribe is not available to write down the transaction. It is also permissible, if the lender is not satisfied merely with the written promise of the repayment of the loan, for the borrower to seek a loan by pledging some property to the lender. But since the Quran urges its followers to be generous in their dealings, and since it is inconsistent with high standards of moral excellence not to make loans to needy persons without keeping some property in custody, the Quran has abstained from mentioning this form of dealing even though it is permissible.

It should also be noted that the purpose of taking a pledge is merely to assure the lender the return of his loan. He has no right at all to benefit from the pledged property. If a person lives, say, either in the building which has been pledged, or pockets its rent, he is guilty of taking interest. There is no essential difference between charging interest directly and using the pledged property. If, however, either cattle or beasts of burden have been pledged, they can be milked and used for transport in lieu of the fodder that one provides them during the period of custody.

(332) Concealing true evidence applies both to a person not appearing to give evidence and to his avoidance of stating facts.

لِلّٰهِ مَا فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِی الۡاَرۡضِ ؕ وَاِنۡ تُبۡدُوۡا مَا فِیۡۤ اَنۡفُسِکُمۡ اَوۡ تُخۡفُوۡهُ یُحَاسِبۡکُمۡ بِهِ اللّٰهُ ؕ فَیَغۡفِرُ لِمَنۡ یَّشَآءُ وَیُعَذِّبُ مَنۡ یَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰی کُلِّ شَیۡءٍ قَدِیۡرٌ ۝

(2-284) All that is in the heavens [333] and the earth belongs to Allah. [334] Whether you disclose whatever is in your hearts or conceal it, [335] Allah will call you to account for it, and will then forgive whomsoever He wills, and will chastise whomsoever He wills. Allah has power over everything.[336]

(333) These are the concluding observations on the subject. Just as this surah opened with an enunciation of the basic teachings of religion, so the fundamentals upon which Islam rests are reiterated in the concluding section of the surah, It is useful to go through the first section of this surah see (**verses 1-5**) while reading these concluding verses.

(334) This is the first fundamental principle of Islam. That God is the Sovereign of the heavens and the earth and all they contain, and that it is improper for man not to bend himself in obedience and service to God.

[335] This sentence mentions two other matters. First, that man is individually responsible to, and answerable before, God. Second, that the Lord of the heavens and the earth, before Whom man is answerable, is All-Knowing. Thus, nothing is concealed from Him, not even intentions and thoughts which lie hidden deep in the hearts and minds of people.

(336) This refers to God's absolute authority. He is not bound by laws framed by others which might limit Him to operating in a certain manner. He is an absolute sovereign and has the full power either to punish or pardon people.

اٰمَنَ الرَّسُوۡلُ بِمَاۤ اُنۡزِلَ اِلَیۡهِ مِنۡ رَّبِّهٖ وَالۡمُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ ؕ کُلٌّ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَمَلٰٓئِکَتِهٖ وَکُتُبِهٖ وَرُسُلِهٖ ۟ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَیۡنَ اَحَدٍ مِّنۡ رُّسُلِهٖ ۟ وَقَالُوۡا سَمِعۡنَا وَاَطَعۡنَا ۫ غُفۡرَانَکَ رَبَّنَا وَاِلَیۡکَ الۡمَصِیۡرُ ۝

(2-285) The Messenger believes, and so do the believers, in the guidance sent down upon him from his Lord: each of them believes in Allah, and in His angels, and in His Books, and in His Messengers. They say: “We make no distinction between any of His Messengers. We hear and obey. Our Lord! Grant us Your forgiveness; to You we are destined to return.” (337)

(337) This verse outlines what one is required to believe in and what should be the distinguishing characteristics of one's conduct. They consist of the following: belief in God, in His angels, in His Books, in all His Messengers (instead of some rather than others), and in the fact that ultimately one will have to stand before God's judgement. These are the five fundamental articles of faith in Islam. Having accepted them, the only proper attitude for a Muslim is to cheerfully accept and follow whatever directives he receives from God. Instead of exulting in his moral excellence he should be humble and should constantly seek God's forgiveness and mercy.

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللّٰهُ نَفۡسًا اِلَّا وُسۡعَهَا ؕ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتۡ وَعَلَيۡهَا مَا اكۡتَسَبَتۡ ؕ رَبَّنَا لَا تُؤَاخِذۡنَاۤ اِنۡ
نَّسِيۡنَاۤ اَوۡ اَخۡطَاۡنَا ۚ رَبَّنَا وَلَا تَحۡمِلۡ عَلَيۡنَاۤ اِصۡرًا كَمَا حَمَلۡتَهٗ عَلَى الَّذِيۡنَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِنَا ۚ رَبَّنَا
وَلَا تُحَمِّلۡنَا مَا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا بِهٖ ۚ وَاعۡفُ عَنَّا ۟ وَاغۡفِرۡ لَنَا ۟ وَارۡحَمۡنَا ۟ اَنۡتَ مَوۡلٰىنَا
فَانۡصُرۡنَا عَلَى الۡقَوۡمِ الۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ ۝

(2-286) Allah does not lay a responsibility on anyone beyond his capacity.(338) In his favour shall be whatever good each one does, and against him whatever evil he does. (339) (Believers! Pray thus to your Lord): “Our Lord! Take us not to task if we forget or commit mistakes.

Our Lord! Lay not on us a burden such as You laid on those gone before us. (340) Our Lord! Lay not on us burdens which we do not have the power to bear. (341) And overlook our faults, and forgive us, and have mercy upon us. You are our Guardian; so grant us victory against the unbelieving folk.” (342)

(338) Man's answerability to God is limited by the extent of his ability. If a man does not have the ability to do a certain thing, God will not take him to task for not having performed it. In the same way, if it is really beyond a man's ability to abstain from something, God will not blame him for having failed to abstain from it. It should be noted here that man will not be the final judge as to whether he had the ability to do something or not. Such judgement will be made by God alone.

(339) This is the second fundamental principle of God's law of retribution. Every man will be rewarded for the services he has rendered, none will be rewarded for services rendered by others. The same applies to punishment. It is the one who is guilty who will be punished. It is possible, however, that if a man has initiated either good or bad practices, they will continue to affect people's lives. The resulting good and bad deeds of people will be reckoned either to their credit or against them, since they are clearly related to their efforts and actions. It is impossible, however, that a map should be either rewarded for an act of goodness or punished for an act of evil in which he has had no share - neither by intent nor practical action. The requital of acts is not transferable.

(340) The prayer made here is that God should not subject them to the severe tests and the terrible persecutions and hardships undergone by their predecessors. It is God's law that those who commit themselves to follow Truth and righteousness are subjected to severe tests and tribulations, and it is a believer's duty to meet them with patience and fortitude. At the same time, the believer should always pray that God may make it easy for him to follow the path of Truth and righteousness.

(341) Believers pray to God not to place upon them a burden beyond their capacity of endurance, and to subject them only to those tests from which they may emerge triumphant. May it not happen that the hardships are too much for them to bear, and that their feet falter and are turned away from the path of righteousness,

(342) In order to appreciate fully the spirit of this prayer, one should remember that these verses were revealed on the occasion of the ascension of the Prophet, a year before his migration to Madinah. At that time the struggle between Islam and unbelief had reached its climax. Not only in Makka, but throughout the Arabian peninsula, there was no place where the lives of those who wished to follow the religion of God had not been made extremely difficult. In these circumstances the Muslims were told in what manner they ought to pray to their Lord. It is obvious that if the bestower himself tells one how to present one's request, the granting of the request becomes virtually assured. Hence, this prayer greatly strengthened the hearts of the Muslims. Moreover, this prayer implicitly taught the Muslims not to allow their feelings to flow along undesirable channels. They should instead mould them into a prayer to their Lord.

Think of the heart-rending cruelties to which the Muslims were subjected merely because of their devotion to Truth, and then turn to the contents of this prayer, where there is no trace of bitterness against the enemies. Consider the physical afflictions and material losses which the Muslims suffered, then note how this prayer does not contain the slightest hint of worldly ambition. Compare the wretchedness and misery of these devotees of Truth with the pure, exalted feelings with which this prayer is overflowing. This comparison will enable us to appreciate the nature of the spiritual and moral training provided to men of faith.